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Security Council

Sixty-sixth year

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Thursday, 17 March 2011, 10.15 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Li Baodong	(China)
Members:	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Ms. Čolaković
	Brazil	Mrs. Dunlop
	Colombia	Mr. Osorio
	France	Mr. Briens
	Gabon	Mr. Moungara Moussotsi
	Germany	Mr. Wittig
	India	Mr. Manjeev Singh Puri
	Lebanon	Ms. Ziade
	Nigeria	Mr. Amieyeofori
	Portugal	Mr. Moraes Cabral
	Russian Federation	Mr. Pankin
	South Africa	Mr. Sangqu
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Parham
	United States of America	Mrs. DiCarlo

Agenda

The situation in Afghanistan

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security (S/2011/120)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Afghanistan

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security (S/2011/120*)

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): Under rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I should like to invite the representatives of Afghanistan, Australia, Canada, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Italy, Japan, New Zealand, Norway, Pakistan and Turkey to participate in this meeting.

Under rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Staffan de Mistura, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, to participate in this meeting.

Under rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite His Excellency Mr. Pedro Serrano, Acting Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2011/120*, containing the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security; and document S/2011/118, containing a note verbale dated 4 March 2011 from the Permanent Mission of Afghanistan addressed to the Secretary-General, transmitting a letter dated 1 March 2011 from the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan addressed to the secretary-General.

I shall now give the floor to Mr. De Mistura.

Mr. De Mistura: I should like to make a special request. This is the tenth year of heavy engagement of many States Members of the United Nations in Afghanistan. In a few days, President Karzai shall formally announce areas that will be transferred to Afghan ownership through the transition. It is therefore time, with the Council's permission, to pay special attention to the desire of the Afghan authorities for national sovereignty and to mark it symbolically by asking all participants in this meeting to facilitate, assess and promote the transition to full ownership and leadership by the Afghans. I know this is slightly irregular but I believe it to be an important symbol, and I should like to make a special request to you, Sir, and the members of the Security Council for my friend Ambassador Tanin to speak before me.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I give the floor to the representative of Afghanistan.

Mr. Tanin (Afghanistan): I was expecting to listen to Mr. De Mistura first, but he has made a very kind gesture to me and my country. My country and the leadership of Afghanistan admire his role and leadership. We benefit from his leadership as a leading international coordinator in Afghanistan and here in New York.

At the outset, I congratulate you, Sir, on assuming the presidency of the Council this month. I also wish to thank the Secretary-General for his report on the situation in Afghanistan (S/2011/120*) and extend a warm welcome back to the Council to my good friend Special Representative Staffan de Mistura.

I also take this opportunity to express, on behalf of the Government and people of Afghanistan, deepest sympathies to the people and Government of Japan for the tragic loss of life and destruction resulting from the earthquake and tsunami this past week. We stand beside the friendly people of Japan as they recover from that tragedy.

As we come together to discuss the situation in Afghanistan, my country is embarking on the transition to full Afghan sovereignty, national ownership and leadership in an effort to realize the noble vision of a secure, democratic and prosperous nation that is able to meet the needs of citizens independently. We in Afghanistan know that transition is no easy task but, with our full determination and unity and the sincere support and commitment of the international community, it is achievable. The logic of transition will guide the way forward over the next four years. Afghanistan is determined, during that time, to assume full responsibility at all levels in order to provide Afghans with security, opportunities for social and economic progress and the benefits of a society governed by the rule of law.

The role of the international community in supporting the transition will remain essential for our success. It London, Kabul and Lisbon, the international community endorsed and committed to supporting the transition towards Afghan ownership and leadership. Over the next four years, the international community's role in Afghanistan will revolve around the needs and requirements of the transition process.

Today's meeting comes on the eve of the renewal of the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). As the lead international civilian coordinator, the role of the United Nations in Afghanistan over the transition period and beyond will remain crucial. We would like to convey our appreciation for the resolute commitment of all United Nations staff working und[illegible]difficult conditions to help to meet the aspirations of the Afghan people. As we prepare to officially commence the transition process, on 21 March, we look to the United Nations as a key partner on the way forward.

Afghanistan cannot stand on its own feet if its State institutions remain weak and undermined by various parallel structures and its capacity is not strengthened. Securing Afghanistan is therefore first and foremost about Afghan ownership and leadership, taking responsibility and operating effectively to achieve sustainable progress. That is our ultimate goal, to which we are firmly committed.

In the past weeks, we have engaged in discussions about how UNAMA's mandate should evolve in the light of the transition. In that regard, on 1 March, the Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, His Excellency Mr. Zalmai Rassoul, sent a letter to the Secretary-General on behalf of the Government of Afghanistan, in which he underscored three main requests.

The first was a comprehensive review of UNAMA's mandate and the role of the United Nations in Afghanistan, to be conducted within the next six months in consultation with the relevant stakeholders. In the subsequent weeks, we agreed that such a review would be done before the Bonn Conference at the end of 2011.

The second was greater coherence, coordination and efficiency in the work of the United Nations funds, programmes and agencies operating in Afghanistan towards one United Nations. Such an approach, brining each of the United Nations entities into synergy, is necessary for an efficient and successful transition in the country.

The third was the reshaping of this year's mandate for UNAMA around the transition. To that end, the Government of Afghanistan proposed the following adjustments to the mandate.

First, transition must be the central focus of UNAMA. A United Nations mandate centred on transition objectives would facilitate a smooth shift to Afghan ownership and leadership. The underlying imperative to transition full responsibility for security, governance and development to Afghan leadership by the end of 2014 should guide the work of UNAMA and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General.

Second, emphasis must be placed on UNAMA's responsibility as the co-chair of the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board to promote coherence in the international community's support for the Afghan-defined and Afghan-led development strategy.

Third, we stress the need to increasingly channel aid through the Afghan budget and to align it with our Afghan national priority programmes. We are convinced that this will lead to more effective and efficient utilization of development assistance.

Fourth, UNAMA plays a crucial role in improving civil military coordination with the International Security Assistance Force. However, that role should be recalibrated to reflect the aim of the transition process in order to support Afghan-led stabilization efforts.

Fifth, national ownership of the reintegration and reconciliation process is necessary. We are reaching out to all Afghans who are willing to renounce violence and join the peace process. The peace and reconciliation process is Afghan-led and could benefit from the support and good offices of UNAMA, if so requested by the Afghan Government.

Sixth, the Afghan Government must have ownership of the election process, based on the clear requirements of the Afghan Constitution and the principle of Afghan sovereignty. In line with the Kabul and London communiqués, the Government of Afghanistan is fully committed to electoral reform as a measure to ensure sustainability for the democratic process — one that is national in nature and is addressed by the citizens of Afghanistan. We welcome the availability of UNAMA in helping with capacity

building and technical assistance with regard to electoral law, if requested by the Government of Afghanistan. Last year's elections in Afghanistan cost hundreds of millions of dollars, which is not sustainable for an Afghan-led democratic process over time. The election process in Afghanistan must be effective and sustainable. That is only possible through Afghan ownership.

Seventh, a reassessment of UNAMA's work throughout the country is necessary. While the presence of UNAMA's offices in eight regional zones remains important, the number, location and terms of reference of UNAMA's offices in other provinces should be looked at within the comprehensive mandate review. That will help to encourage Afghan institutions to end the culture of dependence, avoid unnecessary security risks for UNAMA staff and streamline funding for the relevant United Nations agencies in the country.

Eighth, UNAMA's role in supporting efforts to enhance governance and the rule of law would be achieved best through strengthening the efforts of the Government of Afghanistan, in accordance with the Kabul process. That is the reason that we request that all efforts be made towards strengthening the Afghan Government's capacity.

Ninth, the coordinating role of UNAMA in delivering humanitarian assistance in accordance with humanitarian principles is crucial. However, on the way forward, the focus must be on strengthening the central coordinating role of the Government of Afghanistan, consistent with the goal of Afghan ownership.

The realization of our requests will not only facilitate a more efficient United Nations in the years to come, but also a Government that functions with greater confidence in its ability to become self-reliant. Ten years after the Bonn Conference, Afghanistan is adamant in its decision to take responsibility for its country and people. That is a process that will not happen overnight, but over time. Throughout the four-year transition to Afghan leadership and ownership, and beyond, the enduring partnership between Afghanistan and the international community, the United Nations and other partners will remain crucial. Transition is not an end to the relationship between Afghanistan and the international community, but the beginning of a new chapter in an evolving partnership.

We must end the war and violence in Afghanistan. The time has come to ensure that Afghans have the chance to live in peace, free from the threat of violence and suffering they have endured for many years. The war against terrorism will not be won without the confidence and support of the Afghan people. While most civilian casualties are caused by the Taliban and Al-Qaida, incidents of loss of innocent life during military operations have increased. However, our moral obligations place a heavy burden on us to make the protection of civilian lives our first priority. Civilian casualties must end and additional measures must be taken to prevent harm to civilians.

We all have come to realize that war and violence cannot be ended through military means alone. That is why we continue to reach out to all those who want to join the peace process. The support of the international community and our enduring partnership is essential for that process and for success in Afghanistan. Afghans are determined to work towards their own destiny. Let us renew our efforts to achieve peace and prosperity in the country through the transition and beyond.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I now give the floor to Mr. Staffan de Mistura, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan.

Mr. de Mistura: Thank you, Mr. President, and all members of the Security Council for giving me the opportunity to convey some of our comments. I am very glad to speak after Ambassador Tanin, because we need to hear the voice of the Afghan Government, authorities and people, this year in particular.

As today marks a year since I assumed my duties in Afghanistan, perhaps this is also an opportunity for me to reflect on the events of the past year and on what can happen, and perhaps should be happening, over the course of this year and beyond.

We went from the London Conference to the Lisbon Summit. We saw those events linked together with other important events, such as the Peace Jirga, the Kabul Conference and the parliamentary elections, all of which have sent a continuous message of an increased sense of Afghan ownership and transition to an Afghan-led future. Transition is clearly premised on sovereignty and the build-up of Government capacity to manage its own affairs. All of that is also further grounded on the need for Afghans to articulate and

execute their own political vision of a stable, sovereign Islamic constitutional democracy and an Afghanistan at peace with itself, its neighbours and the international community.

As we have heard today and seen in the letter (see S/2011/118, annex) from Foreign Minister Rassoul to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, the Government of Afghanistan is increasingly and legitimately demanding to lead all aspects of governance, development and efforts to achieve peace. In that regard, we interpret the recent letter as constructive. We see the upcoming review of the United Nations support to Afghanistan and its mandate as a good opportunity to streamline the activities of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and the United Nations family in a coherent effort to deliver as one.

The primary focus in the forthcoming months will be on the transition of security arrangements as the international forces begin the gradual transition and as the Afghan security forces assume the leading responsibility for security. Preparing the Afghan forces to shoulder an increased responsibility for military and security operations is a formidable challenge. The Afghan security forces will be called upon to sustain the security gains made over the past year. At the same time, they will need to gain the confidence of the Afghan people, despite the persistent violence and intimidation campaign by the insurgents against communities across the country. The spectacular horror in the use of attacks will remain, I am afraid, a tactic of the insurgency for the time being, as will their efforts to interfere with the current military surge.

We welcome the transition in security. As the Council is aware, we have been constructively supporting that transition as active observers. We intend to continue following up in that regard, through our own contribution to the civilian transition in the areas to be announced by President Karzai, likely on 21 March.

Transitioning provinces must be given incentives and be rewarded, and not just neglected after the transition has taken place. Secretary Clinton's recent remarks were clear in that regard: the ongoing military and civilian surge needs to be matched by an enhanced diplomatic surge. Frankly, we have also been asking for a surge to protect civilians owing to the spike in civilian casualty rates.

Transitioning also requires the existence of sustainable institutions at the national and subnational levels that can continue the job. Therefore, sovereignty comes with increased responsibility and accountability, and that is why we need to work together.

In that respect, Afghans have made a great deal of progress this year. Two Afghan independent electoral bodies have carried out their work with professionalism and have shown an improved capacity to take the lead on electoral preparations with the required technical assistance. Parliament was inaugurated on 26 January by President Karzai, with all members in attendance. The election of a minority candidate as the leader of the Wolesi Jirga shows that, at the end of the day, Afghans can truly find their own solutions and meet various ethnic, factional and regional needs. With an executive board now fully appointed, we believe that the legislature now has a chance to embark on its own agenda in Afghanistan.

We recognize the need to support Afghanistan beyond 2014 in its own efforts to normalize the country and guarantee long-term Afghan ownership, backed by capacity-building. For that reason, while we are keen on supporting the spirit of transition, we are also available to go beyond that. After all, we have been there for the past 60 years, and if the Afghan authorities need us to be there, we will again be helping the Afghans next year and even beyond the transition period.

Turning to peace, reintegration and regional issues, the beginning of the month saw a very important meeting of the International Contact Group on Afghanistan, held in Jeddah. The presence of the High Peace Council representative at that meeting was a major message to all of us. That meeting endorsed the High Peace Council, again in line with Afghan ownership, and called for a Kabul-based approach to peace and reconciliation initiatives, with the support of a group of international and regional players that would meet, and be based in, Kabul.

On the ground in Afghanistan, UNAMA will continue to facilitate the work of the High Peace Council, at its own request, through the Salaam Support Group. UNAMA will also continue to support the unfolding of the process led by the Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Programme, which continues to make progress, having reintegrated some 700 individuals to date. Minister Stanekzai recently

requested that UNAMA provide further assistance in reaching out to the provinces. By according neutrality to such outreach efforts and having a presence in the field, we believe that UNAMA can actually assist them in reaching all segments of Afghan society.

With regard to human rights, humanitarian issues and Afghan women, civilian casualties are a great source of concern. A report on the issue was recently released by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. We share the concern of the Government, the International Security Assistance Force, the international community and the people of Afghanistan about the huge number of civilian casualties.

Since 2007, some 9,000 civilians have perished in this conflict. The greatest number of deaths — 2,777 — occurred in 2010. Statistics is one thing, but people are another thing. Every death is one too many. That is why we will continue to recognize the issue and advocate for the situation to end.

We hope that there will certainly be a surge to guard against further civilian casualties. Unfortunately, as the Council is aware, although we have given anti-Government elements an opportunity to participate in the civilian casualties report by contributing their own data, if they have any, and to make their own contribution by reducing the number of casualties, we have not received a response to date.

We should also focus on the increased so-called conflict-induced humanitarian needs, for which there is indeed need. It is not only poverty and natural disasters, but also conflict that results in a great deal of collateral humanitarian effects. That is why the role of United Nations agencies in the field is quite important at this stage.

On the political and socio-economic agenda, women, girls and boys need to be supported. We are advocating for that.

With regard to the footprint, civilian transition per se is both an imperative and an opportunity. We believe that the United Nations subnational presence in Afghanistan has been supporting the Government in many fields — coordination, governance, human rights, the rule of law and many more areas. There are 30 United Nations agencies and programmes in Afghanistan, working on the Council's behalf and assisting the Government in 34 provinces. To date, they have spent $904 million on humanitarian and development activities in Afghanistan.

Millions of Afghans are benefiting from this, but we do recognize that we need to carry out a review in order to fine-tune those efforts even further. Let me recall that the World Food Programme is reaching approximately 7.3 million vulnerable Afghans every day of every year. The World Health Organization and UNICEF have supported the vaccination of 7.5 million children this year and over the previous two years. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has been assisting Afghan authorities in the voluntary repatriation of 4.5 million Afghans. The United Nations Mine Action Coordination Centre has assisted 2,553 communities to remove, in partnership with Afghans, 300,000 mines. The United Nations Development Programme has assisted in more than 7,400 civil service positions and in capacity-building. There has also been counter-narcotics support, provided by United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

All of these United Nations entities are at the disposal of Afghan authorities in order to help Afghans feel that they will not be abandoned once again after the transition is over and we move towards a more sovereign and Afghan-led future.

With regard to drugs, that is an issue about which we are indeed concerned. There is no doubt that drugs are a threat to both Afghan and international peace and stability. I have been in Tehran and neighbouring countries and this issue comes up all the time. The narcotics issue also warrants shared responsibility among international stakeholders. The Government has made progress over recent years, as its neighbours, and I believe all of us, recognize. However, the situation remains one of great concern. The facts speak of a dramatic situation, with addiction both in Afghanistan and neighbouring countries due to massive production. While production has decreased, it has recently been stimulated by increasing prices, which have tripled during the reporting period. Therefore, the measures taken must have an impact on the whole chain — from eradication to crop substitutions, precursors, chemicals and global demand reduction. I therefore appeal to the Council to build the counter-narcotics capacity of the Government of Afghanistan and ensure that we can see some progress this year.

In conclusion, this is a crucial year. I know we have heard this many times. Every year is crucial in Afghanistan, but some years are more crucial than others. The year 2011 is one of transition, leading up to 2014. That is why we need to work closely together.

We have heard Ambassador Tanin. We have heard loud and clear the message from Afghan authorities about their sovereignty and the fact that we cannot — none of us, not even the Afghan authorities — work as if it were business as usual any more. We should therefore constantly adjust our profile in activities on the basis of Afghan-led, Afghan-owned priorities. We must go beyond security and political gains and give further consideration to development.

As I have said, we have been with the Afghan people for 60 years. We were there during the Taliban. I myself was there during the time of Najibullah. And we are there now. Hopefully, we will be there as long as the Afghans need us. UNAMA has therefore positioned itself to be supportive of the Afghan Government in this period of great transition and greater responsibility. We would like to continue to do so.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Mr. de Mistura for his briefing.

Mr. Wittig (Germany): Let me first extend a particular word of thanks to Special Representative Staffan de Mistura for his briefing today, and to his colleagues in the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) for their dedicated and outstanding work in fulfilment of the Council's mandate and in support of the Afghan Government and people. Staffan de Mistura and UNAMA are working under extremely complex and challenging circumstances. I also thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive and very timely report (S/2011/120*). My delegation is grateful to Ambassador Tanin for his welcome remarks and for the close cooperation we enjoy with him and his team.

Before I offer some remarks from my national perspective, let me underline that my Government aligns itself with the statement to be delivered later by the representative of the European Union. The European Union is one of the major supporters of stabilization in Afghanistan and the region.

Afghanistan is a national foreign policy priority for the German Government. We consider it an honour to be holding the pen on this important Security Council dossier for the next two years and we look forward to working with the Council in support of Afghanistan. We thank our Turkish predecessors for their valuable work and their continuous commitment, in particular in the field of regional cooperation.

My Government will continue to support our Afghan friends as we enter into a phase of concrete transition. The Kabul process is essentially an ambitious agenda for transition towards increasingly Afghan-led processes. It corresponds to the need for real Afghan empowerment, based on the rule of law and national capacities.

Speaking for one of the major donor countries, let me make on point crystal clear: transition does not mean reduced international engagement, but rather a change in our support in and for Afghanistan. Transition will be gradual and conditions-based. The character of the international engagement will focus increasingly on training and capacity-building. Here, UNAMA will continue to be in a unique position to contribute to the empowerment of the Afghan people.

My Government shares the view of the Secretary-General that, wherever we have achieved progress, sustainability must be our key concern. This is of particular relevance in the areas of good governance, the rule of law and human rights and freedoms, including the role of women. We commend the Afghan Government's achievements to date and encourage it to continue to give priority to these policy areas.

In the light of the transition, Germany is concerned by the fact that the technical capacity for the successful implementation of the Government's national priority programmes is not yet in place throughout the country. Especially in regions and areas where early transition is planned, we call on UNAMA and other partners to redouble their efforts in support of the Afghan Government.

Sustainability and a successful transition will not be possible without an inclusive political process. Germany puts great hopes in the evolving reconciliation process. We encourage UNAMA to continue to support the Afghan Government in this field.

We hope that the ongoing tensions around the status of the parliament will be resolved soon, as they are preventing it from effectively discharging its

functions as set out in the Constitution. The continued support of the United Nations will also be essential for further improving the sustainability of the electoral system.

In a couple of days from now, at Nowruz on 21 March, President Karzai will announce the first tranche of areas selected for transition to an Afghan lead in security responsibilities.

Although the overall number of security incidents remains alarming, Germany is encouraged by the recent progress in building the necessary strength of the Afghan security institutions. We are also pleased to note that, despite regional disparities, the latest police survey by the United Nations Development Programme notes the significantly improved confidence of the local population when compared to 2009.

The increasing number of civilian casualties is intolerable. Germany notes with serious concern the latest trends. At the same time, we also note and welcome the continued progress made by Afghan and international forces in avoiding civilian casualties.

Germany firmly supports the extension of the Mission's mandate for 12 months, as recommended by the Secretary-General and requested by the Government of Afghanistan. I am glad to report that we have been observing great unity in the Council's ongoing negotiations on the UNAMA mandate. My delegation wishes to underline, however, that the Afghan Government is right in reminding the Council, in the recent letter from its Foreign Minister (see S/2011/118), of our responsibility and commitment to empowering the Afghan institutions, and that sometimes the amount of goodwill of development partners can also contribute to undermining Afghan solutions to Afghan problems.

In this context, Germany supports a review of United Nations support in the perspective of the next mandate renewal in March 2012, as soon as we are in a position to evaluate, on an informed basis, our first experiences with transition and reconciliation. The Bonn Conference in December, in response to a request from our Afghan friends, was been timed to contribute to such a process.

Let me end by emphasizing that it is the quality of the cooperation between the United Nations and the people of Afghanistan that will ultimately decide our success. Given what we have achieved and invested, my delegation is convinced that there is every reason to continue to work together for a prosperous and secure Afghanistan.

Ms. Ziade (Lebanon) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I wish to thank Mr. Staffan de Mistura, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, for his briefing and his efforts. I also thank the Permanent Representative of Afghanistan for his thorough briefing to the Council and for having reiterated the priorities defined by the Afghan Government for continued cooperation with the international community to provide the conditions most conducive to the transition period, which should be owned and led by the Afghans themselves.

Lebanon supports the cooperation of other Council members on efforts to support Afghan priorities to achieve the well-being of the brotherly Afghan people. We recall and endorse the words of the Permanent Representative on the need to put an end to war and violence in Afghanistan.

Allow me to share a few remarks with the Council. Following the outcome of Afghanistan's recent free elections, lessons must be drawn and reforms must continue while avoiding future obstacles. In addition, the independence of the electoral monitoring institutions must be strengthened. Lebanon welcomes the new Afghan Parliament and invites the legislative, executive and judicial authorities to cooperate and complement each other's work by giving the highest priority to the country's interests over any other interests or considerations.

My country also welcomes the commendable steps undertaken to implement reconciliation and reintegration policies, in particular awareness-raising and capacity-building efforts undertaken throughout the various sectors of Afghan society. We support the request made by the Secretary-General to Security Council members in his report (S/2011/120*) to pay special attention to the impact on the reconciliation and reintegration process of the sanctions regime established by the Council in its resolution 1267 (1999). Indeed, all sectors of Afghan society must be convinced of the benefits of reconciliation, which is the only way to achieve the desired objectives.

At the same time, efforts must be made to ensure the implementation of the commitments made through the Kabul process on security, governance and

development by transferring full responsibility for security in a gradual but thorough manner to the Afghan authorities.

Lebanon condemns the killing and maiming of civilians — some 9,000 to date — and demands that all factions respect international humanitarian law and protect civilians and their possessions. We hope that the repression of and discrimination against women will cease. Women must be protected from violence and guaranteed the rights to education and to participation in public life. We refer to the convention signed between the Afghan Government and the United Nations forbidding the recruitment of minors into the army and the police, and we call for an end to sexual violence by security forces against children. We also welcome progress made in the rehabilitation of military forces, the return of refugees, and demining.

My country believes that practices such as arbitrary detention highlight the flaws in the security situation and the judiciary. We also condemn the high rate of deaths among pregnant women and children under five. We reaffirm the importance of regional cooperation and good-neighbourliness, which have a positive effect on the economic and security situations. They also strengthen the fight against terrorism, organized crime and narcotics trafficking, ensure border security, and strengthen internal reconciliation. Restoring peace in Afghanistan will have a positive effect on the neighbouring countries as well.

Lastly, Lebanon reiterates its appreciation for the efforts of the United Nations bodies and regional and international organizations, including the Organization of the Islamic Conference. We thank them for their efforts in every field and to restore peace, stability and prosperity in Afghanistan, a friendly country with a rich history, culture and resources.

Mr. Sangqu (South Africa): We welcome the participation of the Permanent Representative of Afghanistan, Ambassador Tanin, in this debate and thank him for his statement. We also thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan, Mr. Staffan de Mistura, for presenting the latest report of the Secretary-General on Afghanistan (S/2011/120*).

We believe that a stable, peaceful and democratic Afghanistan is crucial to the broader stability of the region and therefore welcomes the relatively positive developments that have taken place over the past few months in Afghanistan. These include agreement on the Kabul process, momentum on reintegration and reconciliation efforts, and increased cooperation between Afghanistan and its neighbours.

Despite these positive developments, Afghanistan continues to face critical challenges in its endeavour to achieve stability and development. Key among these is the security situation, the worsening humanitarian situation, human rights deficiencies and continuing civilian casualties. Given the magnitude of these challenges, South Africa believes that a comprehensive strategy in incorporating security, humanitarian assistance, good governance and socio-economic development is required.

The continued role played by bilateral partners in supporting the people and the Government of Afghanistan remains indispensable. In this regard, we would like to underscore the central role of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) in supporting the Government of Afghanistan and in coordinating international assistance to the country.

South Africa remains convinced that the only way to lasting peace is through political dialogue. Political reconciliation and dialogue among the Afghan people and leaders remain critical to the long-term stability of Afghanistan. We believe that this dialogue should include all those who are willing to contribute to peace in Afghanistan. We are encouraged by the progress achieved thus far in the peace and reintegration efforts as reflected in report of the Secretary-General. My delegation also shares the sentiment of the Secretary-General that "[a]s reintegration initiatives continue, confidence-building measures can help bring forward and develop an intra-Afghan dialogue" (*S/2011/120**, *para. 82*). In this context, we call upon the political leadership of Afghanistan to utilize this momentum to achieve national reconciliation.

We remain deeply concerned at the continuing number of civilian casualties, as noted in the report before us. While we commend the efforts of the Afghan National Security Forces and international military forces aimed at fighting the Taliban and other anti-Government forces, we call upon them to minimize the risk to civilians. My delegation is particularly concerned about the plight of children caught up in conflict in Afghanistan. These children continue to be deprived of their most basic human rights, including protection, education and assistance.

In this context, we are encouraged by the signing of the action plan between the Government of Afghanistan and the United Nations on the prevention of recruitment of children and its commitment to preventing the killing and maiming of children. Similarly, Afghan women have a significant role to play in the peace and stability of their country. Their role in building a new Afghan society should be welcomed and encouraged. We hope that the newly elected National Assembly will address this matter as a priority.

My delegation believes that there is an inextricable link between development and security in Afghanistan. We are pleased that the Afghan Government has shown its commitment to addressing the socio-economic situation that the country is facing. We encourage the Government to increase its efforts aimed at improving its institutional capacity to offer viable alternatives to poppy cultivation and narcotics.

National ownership and leadership remain crucial to political security and socio-economic progress in Afghanistan. In this context, we commend the transfer of some responsibilities to the Afghan Government, as announced to the Council today by Mr. De Mistura. The international community should continue to support the country's transition from conflict to prosperity. South Africa continues to support the presence and role of UNAMA in Afghanistan. We join other delegations in expressing our appreciation to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and his team for their dedication to and leadership of UNAMA. We support the extension of UNAMA's mandate for a further 12-month period, as recommended by the Secretary-General.

Mrs. DiCarlo (United States of America): We welcome Special Representative De Mistura back to the Council and thank him for his briefing today. We commend his strong leadership of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). I hope that he will convey our deep appreciation to the Mission's staff for the work that they do on behalf of all of us to help build a stronger Afghanistan.

Also, we wish to extend a special welcome to Ambassador Tanin and thank him for addressing the Council once again. I wish to underscore our support for strengthening Afghan leadership and sovereignty, which Ambassador Tanin discussed earlier. The transition to an Afghan security lead, the beginning of United States troop reductions in July, and the ongoing efforts to establish a new United States-Afghanistan strategic partnership declaration are all important aspects of restoring Afghan ownership.

Let me touch on three issues this morning. First, the process of transferring security responsibility to the Afghan National Security Forces is beginning. At their 11 March meeting in Brussels, the defence ministers of States members of NATO and the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) endorsed the recommendations of the joint Afghan-NATO Inteqal Board to begin the transition to Afghan-led security responsibility. In the coming days, we expect that President Karzai will announce which areas of Afghanistan will first undergo this transition. That decision will be based on a thorough assessment of conditions on the ground performed jointly by the Afghan Government and ISAF in the months since Lisbon. The transition process will be gradual and will further bolter Afghan capacity.

Although this transition will largely be security-focused, it will also have an important civilian role. We are pleased that the report of the Secretary-General (S/2011/120*) identifies several areas where the United Nations can play a valuable role in this process, including mediation, conflict resolution, human rights, Afghan capacity-building and supporting Afghan coordination of international assistance. We encourage continued strong cooperation between UNAMA and ISAF as the transition gets under way.

Secondly, we welcome the conclusion of last year's legislative elections with the 26 January inauguration of the Wolesi Jirga. The Secretary-General has concluded that despite significant flaws in the elections, Afghanistan's electoral institutions performed admirably under extremely challenging circumstances. We concur. We understand that the Special Court has begun a recount of elections in several provinces. We remain concerned about any actions that could undermine the integrity of the electoral process, and we urge all Afghan institutions to act within their clearly defined areas of competence, in accordance with the relevant Afghan laws and the Constitution. We look forward to having the United Nations continue its partnership with the different branches of the Afghan Government as they carry out their respective functions under Afghan law, including the electoral reform process.

Thirdly, as Secretary of State Hillary Clinton noted in her remarks at the Asia Society last month, the year 2011 will see the confluence of three surges: a joint Afghan and international military offensive against Al-Qaida and the Taliban; a civilian campaign to bolster the Afghan Government, economy and civil society; and an intensified diplomatic push to bring the Afghan conflict to an end and chart a new and secure future for the region.

The security and governance gains produced by the Afghan and international military and civilian surges have, as Secretary Clinton put it, created an opportunity to get serious about a responsible reconciliation process led by Afghans and supported by intense regional diplomacy and strong United States backing. Under Afghan leadership and ownership, important efforts are already under way to begin a national discussion on reconciliation. President Karzai has formed the High Peace Council, which includes representatives from across Afghanistan. Council leaders are holding meetings in key provinces throughout the country with tribal leaders, civil society, including women, and villagers to hear their hopes and concerns. They are working to form local councils to begin engaging the insurgents and the broader community. We fully support this Afghan effort. We also applaud UNAMA's efforts to support the High Peace Council through the Salaam Support Group.

Over the past two years, the Government of Afghanistan and the international community have laid out clear conditions for insurgents who wish to abandon the fight and rejoin Afghan society. They must renounce violence, cut all ties with Al-Qaida and abide by the Afghan Constitution, including its provisions protecting the rights of women and minorities. Insurgents who choose the path of peace will find a willing partner in the United States.

Reconciliation will require the support of Afghanistan's neighbours, including, most importantly, Pakistan. Pakistan has legitimate concerns that the Afghan Government must acknowledge, but Pakistan also has important responsibilities, including taking firm action to prevent the Afghan Taliban from using Pakistani territory as a safe haven to continue its insurgency. Pressure from Pakistan will help push the Taliban towards the negotiating table and away from Al-Qaida.

Let me also comment briefly on recent civilian casualties. Our principal goal remains to protect the Afghan people. We deeply regret the unintended injury or death of any civilian in the course of military action. The United States and international forces have made extraordinary efforts to reduce civilian casualties and have seen some success, although there is more work to be done. Insurgents, on the other hand, are responsible for at least 75 per cent of civilian casualties, and they use innocent civilians as human shields, extort them for support, take them as hostages and tax their harvests.

We believe that this year holds great promise for Afghanistan and the wider region. We are committed to continued support for the Government and the people of Afghanistan as they move beyond the current conflict towards a brighter future.

Finally, the United States supports the extension of the UNAMA mandate for a further 12 months and thanks the German Mission for its leadership of these negotiations.

Mr. Moraes Cabral (Portugal): I wish to thank our colleague Ambassador Tanin for his very useful comments. National ownership is at the heart of peacekeeping and peacebuilding efforts, an objective that Portugal shares in its fullness. Allow me also to thank the Special Representative and the personnel of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), who face one of the most daunting tasks that the United Nations has undertaken to this day. Allow me to express Portugal's appreciation to them for their commitment, dedication and courage.

Allow me also to recall that at the beginning of this week, a vile attack once again indiscriminately took the lives of dozens of civilians in Kanduz. I am sure that I speak for all of us when I express my condemnation of such despicable, wanton killing and maiming, and I ask Ambassador Tanin to convey our condolences to the victims' families.

Peace and security are Afghanistan's primary needs and the foremost grounds for United Nations assistance to the Afghan Government. The task that is still ahead is vast, and the security progress achieved over the past year, while significant, is also fragile and reversible. Ambassador Tanin can rest assured that Afghanistan's partners are steadfast in their commitment.

Afghan security forces are expanding, reflecting growing Afghan ownership of the security situation. The Afghan national security forces will soon reach their growth figures for trained and operational personnel. While this is a fundamental step in order to attain counter-insurgency goals, we must make sure that these levels are sustainable and that the safety of numbers does not affect standards or capacity.

The Declaration approved in Lisbon in November by the Heads of State and Government of the nations contributing to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) represents a pledge with respect to the long-term nature of the partnership between NATO and Afghanistan.

Portugal reaffirms its support for President Karzai's objective to lead and conduct security operations in all the provinces by the end of 2014, and we will see *Inteqal* through as allies and partners, not only in the area of security but also as regards governance, development and the rule of law.

Afghanistan is on the threshold of transition, a process in which we all have a stake and in which we all must assume our responsibilities. A phase- and conditions-based transition to Afghan-led security is a momentous step for the country, and Afghanistan must be sure of its allies and of the support as laid out at the London and Kabul Conferences and the Lisbon summit.

We look forward, therefore, to the Bonn Conference next December and to the preparatory work to be done in that connection. Portugal will increase its contribution to ISAF by 25 per cent, reaching a total of 250 military personnel to help train their Afghan counterparts. We remain ready to carry out this mission for peace and freedom in Afghanistan.

Nevertheless, there is much to be done in Afghanistan beyond the security situation. Important steps in increasing public trust in institutions, the Administration and the police are needed, and their ongoing efforts deserve our support. Tensions between State branches over the status of Parliament risk undermining the consolidation of institutions and discrediting the democratic process in the eyes of the people.

Finally, electoral reform must be addressed, bearing in mind the effects it may have on the transition period and on the stability of Afghanistan.

Portugal is pleased to be working in the Security Council towards securing a mandate that allows UNAMA to fulfil its mission, namely, increased support for the efforts of the Government of Afghanistan to improve governance, the rule of law and the fight against corruption; better coordination of support and resources; the delivery of humanitarian aid; and the monitoring of the situation of civilians and their protection.

One other fundamental issue is also the coordination between the United Nations agencies and programmes, so that resource allocation is improved, in particular in the areas of counter-narcotics, reconstruction and development.

I should also like to address the issue of human rights. It is, as regards Afghanistan, both a tale of achievement and an enduring concern. Indeed, the security situation should not be a pretext to compromise a consolidation of the democratic process in Afghanistan and the promotion and protection of human rights. Human rights are indeed one of the battlegrounds in Afghanistan. We should not be surprised that the enemies of a democratic and peaceful Afghanistan are proud to despise the most fundamental human rights and make it a point to flaunt their contempt for the country's achievement in this area.

Portugal is particularly encouraged by the significant steps taken by the Government of Afghanistan to prevent the recruitment of children and other commitments to prevent sexual violence. The use of children by the Taliban forces and the attacks against schools and health-care facilities are certainly some of the most dramatic aspects of the current situation in Afghanistan.

Portugal welcomes the recent steps taken towards the further promotion and protection of women's rights, especially as regards the participation of women in Afghan Government institutions, including the civil service. The future of Afghanistan should not be built over the respect of human rights for all and especially should not be built over the human rights of women or at the cost of their education or their participation in public and political life. In this respect, we would encourage the Government of Afghanistan at the highest level to publicly emphasize that the promotion and protection of women's rights is an integral part of peace, reintegration and reconciliation.

Portugal, as a friend, an ally and a partner of Afghanistan, hopes that this Afghan New Year will usher in a clear vision of the path ahead, robust implementation of the planned transition, increased institutional capacity to address the people's needs and, ultimately, a brighter future for Afghanistan.

Mr. Manjeev Singh Puri (India): Mr. President, I would like to thank you for scheduling today's debate on the situation in Afghanistan in the context of the renewal of the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). I would also like to thank Ambassador Zahir Tanin, the Permanent Representative of Afghanistan, for his statement. We are grateful for the latest report of the Secretary-General (S/2011/120) and are appreciative of the briefing by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Staffan de Mistura. May I also take this opportunity to thank my colleagues from Germany for strongly anchoring the negotiations.

The Kabul Conference last year marked the beginning of the Kabul process — a new phase in the partnership of the Afghan Government and the international community. The hallmark of the Kabul process is Afghan ownership and leadership in realizing the shared pursuit of sustained and tangible improvements in security, governance and development in the country. The NATO summit held in Lisbon in November 2010 provided a road map for the transition to full Afghan security responsibility and leadership by the end of 2014.

We could not agree more with the observations made in the report of the Secretary-General that the transition must be Afghan-owned; it must be planned and implemented in a systematic manner; it must ensure the protection and promotion of the human rights of all Afghans; and it must be accompanied by an inclusive political process and an intra-Afghan dialogue.

It is important the transition be linked to the realities on the ground rather than rigid benchmarks, along with a constant assessment and review of the evolving situation in Afghanistan. Building the strength and capabilities of the Afghan national security forces, along with adequate enablers, is imperative to the transition of security responsibilities.

Afghan ownership and leadership are also critical for development and reconstruction in Afghanistan. This also implies greater coherence, coordination and further streamlining of the international community's development efforts, including the aligning of assistance with Afghan national priority programmes and increasingly working through Afghan institutions. It is also important to strengthen the United Nations own coherence and coordination among its various bodies working in Afghanistan, in accordance with the priorities of the Afghan Government.

India supports the Afghan Government's efforts to reintegrate those individuals who abjure violence, give up armed struggle, do not have links with terrorist groups and are willing to abide by the values of democracy, pluralism and human rights as enshrined in the Afghan Constitution. It is important that we respect the red lines for the process, as reaffirmed at the Kabul Conference. Otherwise, we would run the risk of Afghanistan sliding back to become a safe haven for terrorists and extremist groups.

We appreciate the increasing collaboration between the International Security Assistance Force and Afghan national security forces, which has led to security gains in southern Afghanistan and the consolidation of security gains in Kabul. However, it is a matter of deep concern that the overall security situation continues to deteriorate in Afghanistan, and there has, in fact, been a slight increase in security incidents as compared to last year. The recent instances of attacks on civilians in the Kabul Bank in Jalalabad and suicide attacks in Kabul indicate a change in tactics, wherein the Taliban and other opposition groups are opting for soft civilian targets. They also point to the existence of a virtual army of suicide attackers who are being brainwashed, trained and deployed — the scale, location, character and magnitude of which has not been sufficiently analysed in the urge to seek a political solution.

The continued resilience of the insurgents, their changing tactics, their numbers and their spreading out to areas previously considered safe are a grim reminder that the security gains will remain transient unless the international community is able to firmly deal with safe heavens for terrorist groups outside Afghanistan's borders.

For the security and stabilization of Afghanistan, it is important to isolate and root out the syndicate of terrorism that includes elements of Al-Qaida, the Taliban, Lashkar e Toiba and other terrorist and extremist groups operating from within and outside

Afghanistan's borders. In fact, the Jalalabad attack, which bore the hallmark of a mini-Mumbai, pointed to a fusion of techniques and ideology from Al Qaida and Lashkar e Toiba, with elements from the Taliban. The Afghan people must be allowed to rebuild their land in conditions of peace and security, free from interference from their neighbours, and they must be the arbiters of their own destiny.

Afghanistan's stability and economic development depend a great deal on its neighbours and the region as a whole. Afghanistan has immense potential as a land bridge linking Central, West and South Asia to emerge as a trade, transport and energy hub. The recent developments in regional cooperation, including the signing of the agreement on the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India gas pipeline project, will provide added impetus to regional cooperation. Part of the solution lies in Afghanistan being increasingly regionally integrated. Growing economic interdependence would catalyse peace and prosperity in the region at large and in Afghanistan in particular. Afghanistan, as a member of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) since 2005, is increasingly becoming active as a fellow SAARC member. India, as a neighbour, will continue its efforts towards the development of Afghanistan.

India and Afghanistan share a strategic partnership based on the strong foundations of rich historical and civilizational bonds and share the pursuit of regional peace and prosperity. India remains committed to partnering with the Government and people of Afghanistan in the building of a peaceful, stable, democratic and pluralistic nation.

Assisting Afghanistan in capacity-building and skills for human resource development and building Afghanistan's public institutions is a special area of priority for India. India's cumulative development assistance stands at $1.3 billion. In addition, India has committed to providing 100,000 tons of wheat for the Government and people of Afghanistan, in view of the prevailing drought in the country.

The area of Afghanistan south of the Hindu Kush and all the way up to the Ganges delta forms a part of a single geographical and economic basin, with the plains of India constituting the centre of its economic gravity. It is by far Afghanistan's largest regional market, a potential source of investment, skills, training, technology and expertise and a model of democracy and national institution-building in a culturally comfortable context. Closer economic integration with India and other countries in the region is the key to Afghanistan's future and prosperity.

In conclusion, we hope that the international community will continue to remain steadfast in its support to Afghanistan as per the priorities of the Afghan Government. We commend the good work done by UNAMA. In accordance with the wishes of the Afghan Government and as requested by the Secretary-General in his most recent report, India supports the renewal of the mandate of UNAMA for an additional period of one year.

Mr. Amieyeofori (Nigeria): I would first of all like to thank Mr. Zahir Tanin for his insightful statement. We share the sentiments he expressed on national ownership during the new dispensation and in the transitional phase. I would also like to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General de Mistura for his comprehensive briefing on recent developments in Afghanistan.

I will limit my remarks to three issues, namely, political developments and the elections; security; and economic development and the situation in the region.

Nigeria welcomes the concrete steps taken by the Government of Afghanistan towards sustained political and socio-economic development in the country. In particular, we welcome the efforts to strengthen the country's fledgling democratic institutions and structures. We commend both the Independent Election Commission and the Electoral Complaints Commission for contributing significantly to those electoral gains.

We also commend the support of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) for those efforts. Through its enhanced collaboration with other international agencies to provide training and technical and logistical support for the electoral system, recent elections witnessed appreciable success and a historic level of women's participation.

Notwithstanding that achievement, Afghanistan's political process will benefit from sustained electoral reforms aimed at making the process more transparent and credible. Indeed, the political process will bring lasting benefits if it remains open and participatory and is owned by the people of Afghanistan. We stress that genuine implementation of the Afghan-led reconciliation process should be accorded high priority.

That will not only inspire much-needed confidence, it will also strengthen the implementation of the reintegration programme envisioned by the Afghan Constitution. In our view, the sustained dialogue between the parties, which has led to the appointment of warlords, village elders and women to the High Peace Council, is a first step in the right direction.

On security, we note that the Secretary-General's report (S/2011/120*) once again highlighted the fragile security situation in Afghanistan, despite recent improvements in the southern part of the country. It is troubling that Government officials, aid workers and civilians associated with the Afghan Government and the NATO-led forces were the targets and victims of the recent upsurge in civilian killings. The current situation undermines the capabilities of Afghan security forces to assume full local security responsibility with the imminent drawdown of allied forces. Therefore, the transition of the first set of districts and provinces to full Afghan security control later this month will prove to be a significant test of the readiness of the Government to exercise sovereignty within its borders. The Government must strengthen its state of preparedness and remain resolute in assuming full law-enforcement responsibilities by 2014.

Nigeria commends the Government's sustained commitment to the national priority programmes outlined last year. Implementing those programmes and meeting the benchmarks set by the Government will require greater coordination and sustained and timely international assistance. It will also require efforts by the Government to improve accountability, implement good governance, adhere to the rule of law and reform the judicial system.

Today, there is great potential for growth in a range of sectors that could provide jobs in the short and medium terms. The development of infrastructure and agriculture should be accorded priority, as they will stimulate employment and ultimately help the Afghan Government to create a viable and self-sustaining economy. For greater coherence and efficiency, funds and other assistance should be channelled through the Afghan budget system.

On regional cooperation, Nigeria welcomes the growing cooperation between Afghanistan and its neighbours. Such efforts to take advantage of synergies have led to improvement in combating cross-border crimes, including drug trafficking, arms smuggling and human trafficking.

Needless to say, much of the progress in Afghanistan is attributable to international cooperation and contributions. In that regard, we welcome the international conference of foreign ministers scheduled to take place in Bonn at the end of this year. We welcome the emphasis placed on Afghan ownership and management of the process. There are high expectations that the conference will renew international commitment to the dual track of security and effective accountability made at both the London and the Kabul Conferences.

Nigeria commends the staff of UNAMA for their dedication to the task of building and consolidating peace in Afghanistan. We commend Special Representative of the Secretary-General De Mistura for his leadership and commitment to the Mission's vital work in Afghanistan, and we have no hesitation in supporting the renewal of UNAMA's mandate for another 12 months.

Mr. Parham (United Kingdom): I would like to join Council colleagues in thanking the Secretary-General for his report (S/2011/120*), Special Representative of the Secretary-General De Mistura for his briefing, and Ambassador Tanin for his statement.

The year 2011 is another important year for Afghanistan. As transition gathers momentum, the international community must continue to support Afghanistan in making progress on the political and civilian tracks. That is critical to securing a sustainable political settlement and long-term stability in Afghanistan. The United Kingdom is committed to working with the Afghan Government, the United Nations and the wider international community towards that goal.

Foreign Minister Rassoul's letter, circulated to the Council last week (see S/2011/118), rightly highlights United Nations work in recent years in support of lasting peace, security and development in Afghanistan. The United Kingdom supports Mr. Rassoul's call for the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) to correspond with the principles of greater Afghan leadership and ownership, in line with the mutual commitments made at the Kabul Conference last July and with an emphasis on transition. The draft

resolution currently being negotiated by the members of the Council does exactly that.

The United Kingdom also agrees that, in line with the London and Kabul Conference communiqués, donors should aim to channel at least 50 per cent of development aid through the Afghan Government's core budget and to align 80 per cent of aid to the national priority programmes. As Mr. Rassoul says, UNAMA has the primary responsibility for promoting aid coherence.

UNAMA performs a vital role in Afghanistan, coordinating the international effort in building a more stable and secure country, working closely with and in support of the Government of Afghanistan. UNAMA can perform that role only if it has the full support of the Afghan Government and if its staff can operate where it is needed. While there are no plans at present to open new offices, UNAMA's work must not be limited to particular areas or zones of the country.

Any political settlement should be within a constitutional and democratic framework. To that end, we welcome the inauguration of Parliament and the election of a new Speaker for the lower house. Now that the 2009 and 2010 elections are over, this is the ideal time for the Afghan Government to press ahead with electoral reform. UNAMA has a central role to play in supporting the Government as it works to implement the commitments made by President Karzai at the Kabul Conference. We commend UNAMA and Mr. De Mistura for their work, and will continue to encourage their support of the Afghan Government in that area.

As the move towards transition gathers pace, we will continue to work alongside the Afghan Government, as well as our International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) partners, towards President Karzai's objective of transferring lead security responsibility to the Afghan National Security Forces in all provinces by the end of 2014. The NATO defence ministerial meeting last week reaffirmed NATO's continuing commitment to a secure and stable Afghanistan.

Since the Lisbon summit last November, the Afghan Government has made good progress in preparing for the start of transition. The Afghan National Security Forces are growing rapidly in size and capability, supported by improving governance and development. There have been a series of security operations in which they have played an increasing leadership role. Indeed, over the past year, the Afghan National Security Forces have expanded the area in the south of the country under Afghan Government control. If that progress is to be sustainable, it must be supported by development across the rule of law sector through the delivery of the commitments made at the Kabul Conference.

We are ever mindful of the toll suffered by the civilian population as a result of the insurgency. We condemn in the strongest possible terms the insurgents' use of violence and tactics that deliberately intimidate the civilian population, including through assassination. The United Kingdom is committed to working with ISAF partners to take robust measures to protect civilians, and we welcome the continued progress made in that regard.

As we have heard repeatedly in this Chamber, Afghanistan cannot be secured by military means alone. A sustainable political settlement is essential to long-term stability and prosperity. It will underpin the military progress made by ISAF and the Afghan National Security Forces. We welcome the work of the High Peace Council in taking forward the political process, including its outreach to countries in the region and the provincial events that it has held to build support for the Afghan peace and reintegration programme.

While the challenges that Afghanistan faces are considerable, we should acknowledge that progress is being made. Such progress is a result of the partnership among the Afghan Government, the international community and the United Nations. The United Kingdom is fully committed to continuing and strengthening those relationships, underlining our long-term commitment to the Government and people of Afghanistan. UNAMA's role across Afghanistan will become even more important as transition proceeds. The United Kingdom warmly supports the renewal of UNAMA's mandate.

Mr. Briens (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. De Mistura and Ambassador Tanin for their briefings, and endorse the statement to be made by the representative of the European Union.

As we prepare to renew the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), the report of the Secretary-General (S/2011/120*) reminds us of the overall political

context in which that decision is being taken. With the Kabul process and the declaration on the transition adopted in Lisbon on 20 November, the Afghan Government and the nations committed to it set out a road map for Afghans to resume full exercise of their sovereignty.

President Karzai will soon announce the list of the first towns and provinces for whose security Afghans will assume responsibility, the first phase of a gradual transfer throughout the entire country by the end of 2014. France fully supports the transition process. Together with the Afghan Government and our allies, we are committed to making that transfer possible in those areas where our civilian and military components are deployed. We want this to be lasting and irreversible, and to lead to Afghan assumption of responsibilities for governance and development.

To that end, we must advance on three fronts. First, on the security front, we have retaken the military initiative and allowed the Afghan State to regain its footing in a number of areas. The Afghan army and police are increasing in power. Our military and training efforts are beginning to bear fruit, but at the cost of very heavy fighting that has led to an increase in civilian deaths. We know that three-quarters of such deaths are caused by insurgents who no longer hesitate to strike civilian targets and ramp up their assassinations. We understand the emotion that this engenders, and should ensure that the number of civilians killed or wounded by pro-Government forces continues to decrease as it has done in recent years.

In the political field, now that legislative elections have been held and the new Parliament has been seated, we call on all Afghan institutions to meet the true expectations of the voters and to respect their mutual competencies in the framework laid out in the Constitution and based on the principle of the separation of powers.

We also note the progress made in inter-Afghan reconciliation. We continue to support President Karzai's efforts and the actions of the High Peace Council. The insurgents, whoever they may be, need to understand that, if they wish to rejoin political life in Afghanistan, they must break their ties to Al-Qaida and not allow their country to become once again a platform for international terrorism.

On the development front, we have mutual obligations. The international community must better coordinate its civil assistance and align it with Afghan budget priorities. The Government must provide assurances that its funds will be used appropriately and directed to where they are most needed at the local level and in the building of infrastructure that will allow Afghan resources to be developed and exported and the country to be opened to the outside world. France will contribute to that effort in the framework of its presidency of the Group of Eight and the plan defined by the competent Afghan ministers at recent international conferences. We will continue to closely follow the consequences of the Kabul Bank affair.

This context makes the presence and activities of UNAMA and the United Nations as a whole more necessary than ever in that country. I take this opportunity to reaffirm our gratitude to the staff of UNAMA and to express our support for the efforts of Special Representative Staffan de Mistura. We believe that the mandate adopted last year in resolution 1917 (2010) identifies key priorities that remain relevant. The coordination of assistance via the co-chairmanship of the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board, electoral reform, reconciliation through the work of the Salaam Support Group, the timely lifting of the sanctions regime pursuant to resolution 1267 (1999), military-civilian coordination in the framework of the transition, and regional cooperation should continue to guide the efforts of the Special Representative.

We take note of the letter addressed to the Secretary-General by Mr. Rassoul (see S/2011/118) and are pleased to note that most of his requests have been incorporated into the draft resolution. Some points should still be recalled.

First, we believe that the Special Representative of the Secretary-General should remain involved in electoral system reform, although the latter should be undertaken first and foremost by the Afghans themselves. The United Nations supported the Afghans in the holding of elections in 2009 and 2010 and, through its efforts on other fronts, accumulated expertise that it would be a shame to squander.

Secondly, we need to adapt the mandate of UNAMA to the new context of the transition, which will gradually redefine the outlines of our civilian and military involvement in Afghanistan. We will need more than ever a robust United Nations presence in Kabul and at the local level. The role of UNAMA should therefore be strengthened and converted to take

into account international efforts on behalf of Afghanistan. In the case of NATO, such efforts include the launching of a long-term partnership with Afghanistan. The lead role of the United Nations in these efforts should be consolidated during the transition.

Lastly, as requested by the Afghans, we must profit from this context to make an overall assessment of the work of UNAMA with a view to the next extension of its mandate in March 2012. This reconstruction should be undertaken in full transparency with the Afghan authorities. Through that 12-month re-extension, which we support, we reaffirm our trust in the activities of the Special Representative and our common desire to see an Afghanistan that is democratic, independent, stable and prosperous and has rejected violence and instability once and for all.

Mr. Moungara Moussotsi (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): We, too, wish to thank Staffan de Mistura for introducing the report of the Secretary-General (S/2011/120*), and the Permanent Representative of Afghanistan for his statement.

The Secretary-General's report paints a somewhat mixed picture of the overall situation in Afghanistan. Its assessment closely resembles that which we made here in the Council in December 2010 during a similar debate (see S/PV.6464). Given the situation, one might readily draw the conclusion that the security issue must remain a priority of the Afghan Government with a view to a successful and sustainable transition in that country. Like the Secretary-General, my delegation believes that the conclusion of the political transition process, the strengthening of regional security and cooperation, the protection of civilians and respect for human rights in general must be at the heart of the concerns of the Afghan Government.

As regards the political and institutional process, my delegation regrets the fact that it is having trouble taking root. The current controversy surrounding representation clearly shows that the political transition in Afghanistan is weak. There is a fear that such divisions could delay the rebuilding of the country and undermine the gains achieved in the national reconciliation process. Even so, the seating of Parliament on 23 January was to the credit of the political process. Its effectiveness could be a decisive factor in the democratic evolution of that country, and consequently a useful tool for the success of the transition period.

My delegation welcomes the large number of women elected to Parliament, which highlights their interest in the political future of their country. We also stress the fact that the transitional process must be inclusive by involving the largest possible number of Afghans, if not all, in the development of their country.

It will be agreed that the political situation in Afghanistan cannot evolve without a simultaneous evolution in the security sphere, which has barely improved. The recent proliferation of violence and indiscriminate killing throughout the country, in particular in the south, offer the international community little reassurance with respect to the ongoing transition process. My delegation still believes that a solution to the Afghan crisis must be political and not military. The military dimension can only support the political strategy. We therefore stress the need for the Afghan Government to emphasize the strengthening of its political institutions and the national reconciliation process.

The promotion and protection of human rights are another area to which the Government must redirect its efforts. The protection of the rights of civilians, in particular women and children, is an increasing source of concern, as are the enrolment of children in armed groups and the fight against corruption and drug trafficking. In that regard, my delegation encourages the Afghan Government to fulfil its commitments to pursue cooperation with neighbouring countries.

Afghanistan's future is at stake. We should take up our collective responsibility for the reconstruction of the country, which has for many years been affected by violence and internal division. Lasting peace in Afghanistan could have positive effects on the entire region. It would also bring hope to the millions of women and children whose outlook continues to be characterized by uncertainty and lack of hope in a bright future for Afghanistan.

We would like to thank the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) for its important contribution to stabilizing Afghanistan. My delegation is aware of the need to support the Government and people of Afghanistan in making the transition process a success through national ownership over their destiny. We support the Secretary-General's

proposal to extend UNAMA's mandate for an additional 12 months.

Mr. Pankin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We are grateful to Mr. Staffan de Mistura for his briefing and we welcome the statement made by Ambassador Tanin, Permanent Representative of Afghanistan.

In general, we share the assessments contained in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2011/120*) on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security. We would like to touch on a number of points.

We are seriously concerned about the ongoing high level of violence in Afghanistan, compelling evidence of which is provided by statistics in the Secretary-General's report. The terrorist activities of Al-Qaida, the Taliban movement and other terrorist and extremist groups continue unabated. We are also concerned about their expanded use of asymmetrical actions, which are resulting in an ever increasing number of civilian victims, including women and children. While we note the efforts of the international military presences to reduce the number of civilian losses, we share the deep concern of Afghan authorities with regard to ongoing incidents involving civilian losses, including children, during military operations.

There is a need to end situations in which insurgents are pushed out of areas where counter-terrorist activities are under way while instability spills over into calmer areas. In that regard, we note in particular the northern part of the country, where a deterioration of the situation could have destabilizing ramifications for neighbouring regions of Central Asia.

Those kinds of negative trends call for the utmost prudence when implementing a reconciliation programme, which will only be effective if it is carried out with Afghan Government leadership. We therefore support the intention of President Karzai to integrate only those who decide to end violence, take part in the building of a free and open society, respect the Constitution, break with Al-Qaida and other terrorists and work to seek political aims through peaceful means.

A crucial element in the reconciliation and reintegration process — and in an Afghan settlement in general — continues to be effective compliance with the sanctions regime imposed by resolution 1267 (1999).

Afghanistan stands at the threshold of a new era in its history. The process of Afghanization of governance is now beginning. We support the ultimate goal of a transfer of responsibility for security in the country to national security forces by 2014. Among other things, that goal implies effective measures to increase and appropriately equip the Afghan armed forces and police so that they can independently ensure the security of their citizens. In that regard, the withdrawal of the International Security Assistance Force will be possible only once it has reported to the Security Council that it has implemented its mandate.

Additional efforts are also needed to assist in the social and economic rehabilitation of the country. There is also a need to focus on the speedy implementation of projects that are of vital importance, above all in the areas of energy, transport, agriculture and mineral extraction. In that connection, the role of the United Nations continues to be crucial in coordinating international civilian efforts to help Afghanistan return to normal life. We are certain that an updated mandate for the United Nations Mission in Afghanistan, which is to be reflected in the draft resolution now being drafted, will fully meet those goals.

We have taken note of the assertion in the report of the Secretary-General that expanding regional cooperation and constructive participation by Afghanistan's neighbours constitutes an important element in implementing the Kabul process. We believe that a useful coordinating role in that regard could be played by such credible regional organizations as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Collective Security Treaty Organization, which have extremely interesting know-how and experience in their activities in the Afghan area.

It is clear that a peaceful and democratic future for Afghanistan cannot emerge without addressing such a critical problem as the illicit production and trafficking in drugs. The magnitude of this problem has reached such dangerous proportions that the international community has rightfully described this scourge as a threat to international peace and security. It should be recalled that drug trafficking continues to be one of the central sources for the financial underpinning of the subversive activities of terrorists and extremists. Given the soaring prices for opiates and the great likelihood that Afghan drug production will increase this year, we again draw attention to the need

to adopt effective measures to destroy drug crops and laboratories and stop the flow of precursors into Afghanistan. The decision to list drug lords on the Security Council sanctions list still needs to be implemented.

The drug threat must be countered jointly. We call on the Government of Afghanistan and the International Security Assistance Force to immediate undertake active counter-narcotics efforts. We also reaffirm the readiness of the Collective Security Treaty Organization to engage with them, within the context of the Operation Kanal drug interception effort, to implement initiatives — with the coordinating role of the United Nations and the involvement Afghanistan's neighbouring countries, of course — to establish a comprehensive system of counter-narcotic and financial security buffer zones. It is only by pooling efforts that we will achieve our common goal of building an Afghanistan that is a stable, democratic, independent, neutral and prosperous State, free from terrorism and drug-related crime.

For our part, we are prepared to continue to provide this country multifaceted assistance in efforts to stabilize the internal situation and ensure sustainable economic development.

Mr. Osorio (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would very much like to welcome and thank Ambassador Zahir Tanin, Permanent Representative of Afghanistan, and Mr. Staffan de Mistura, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), for their statements and analyses of the situation in that country.

My delegation would like to highlight the contribution of UNAMA in improving the stabilization and democratization process in Afghanistan. At the same time, the Government's request for a renewal of UNAMA's mandate shows that the people of Afghanistan have trust in the Mission's ability to help lay the foundations for sustainable peace and development.

We believe it appropriate to focus UNAMA's mandate on supporting the Government in key areas, such as security, governance, economic development and regional cooperation. We also support the emphasis on a transition towards greater Afghan responsibility and leadership in the essential areas of security, the rule of law and development.

The transition process, and in particular the peace and stabilization processes, will only be sustainable if they are accompanied by an inclusive political process that includes genuine reconciliation and dialogue. The convening of the Consultative Peace Jirga, the establishment of the High Peace Council and the adoption of the Peace and Reintegration Programme are all initiatives in the right direction whose value we duly appreciate.

We support ongoing work within the agreed timetable in order to ensure that Afghan forces resume leadership in the area of security by 2014. Nevertheless, we concur with the Secretary-General that this effort should be led by the progress made on the ground. In that respect, we recognize the efforts of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan and the International Security Assistance Force. We encourage them to continue to work with the Afghan authorities to create conditions that will enable them to gradually assume full responsibility for governance, security and economic development, in line with the Kabul process.

As the Afghan Government gradually assumes its responsibilities for security, it is crucial that judicial institutions have the necessary human, political and financial resources to implement judicial and accountability mechanisms with a view to restoring the public's trust in public institutions. That includes the fight against corruption and organized crime.

It is also essential to resolve outstanding issues, such as those involving the case of the Bank of Kabul and electoral reforms, with a view to addressing claims of fraud in the recent elections and to ensure that all Afghan communities are suitably represented in parliament.

We regret the increase in the number of security incidents in recent months and that violence persists as one of the main factors affecting progress in Afghanistan. The deteriorating security situation had led to an increase in humanitarian needs and in the number of civilian deaths and internally displaced persons. We urge all parties to the conflict to fulfil their obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law and to take all necessary steps to protect civilians.

Afghanistan faces numerous problems that could threaten the sustainability of the gains made thus far. That is why, in the context of the principle of shared

responsibility as the basis for a comprehensive approach to combating the global drug problem comprehensively in all its aspects, my country reiterates its willingness to strengthen bilateral cooperation with Afghanistan to address that and other types of organized crime.

We believe that creating sustainable economic development opportunities for those who cease cultivating illicit crops is a key component of any anti-drug policy and should be the focus of international cooperation. Similarly, we wish to emphasize the importance of joint regional initiatives undertaken to combat the global drug problem in all its aspects in the region. The constructive and sustained engagement of various regional and extraregional actors with an interest in implementing common strategies to combat this phenomenon contributes to stabilization and builds mutual trust among neighbouring countries and those outside the region.

Security is a key condition for strengthening the rule of law and guaranteeing the full exercise of fundamental freedoms. Following a military victory, a political solution and true reconciliation are needed. We agree with the Secretary-General that, vis-à-vis the international community, the full exercise of Afghan sovereignty is a right and a responsibility towards the Afghan people. With those goals in mind, we support the three key principles mentioned by the Secretary-General, namely, leadership and ownership, sustainable planning and implementation and the protection and promotion of the rights of all Afghans.

Mrs. Dunlop (Brazil): I also thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General de Mistura for his briefing and for his leadership of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). I warmly welcome Ambassador Tanin and thank him for his remarks on the priorities set by his Government. We took due consideration of Minister Zalmai Rassoul's letter to the Secretary-General (S/2011/118, annex). Brazil supports Afghanistan's aspirations for ownership in ongoing processes and for full sovereignty.

The situation in Afghanistan has visibly improved over the past year. First and foremost, I wish to congratulate the Afghan people. I would also like to acknowledge the importance of the work of the Independent Election Commission and the Electoral Complaints Commission, which acted in a commendable way throughout the electoral process.

The tensions over the status of parliament, however, must be solved in a mature and institutional way. Efforts to create the foundations for sustainable peace through political dialogue must continue. It is only with the sincere involvement of all stakeholders that the remaining challenges will be overcome.

In that sense, we welcome the latest peace and reintegration efforts by the Afghan Government, especially such initiatives as the High Peace Council and the Afghan Peace and Reintegration Programme. The fact that armed groups are increasingly joining the reintegration process is another positive trend that the international community should support. We commend the role being played by UNAMA in providing logistical assistance to the High Peace Council's missions throughout the country.

Efforts to further regional cooperation are essential for the well-being of the Afghan people. In that regard, we welcome the instances of Afghanistan's increasing cooperation with its neighbours, such as the signing of the intergovernmental agreement and gas pipeline framework agreement, as well as the ratification of the Afghanistan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement.

Nevertheless, the security situation is still alarming. The human cost of the armed conflict in Afghanistan grew in 2010. Civilian deaths have been increasing each year. Although the majority of civilian casualties are caused by anti-Government forces, it is important that the International Security Assistance Force and other international forces continue to review their tactics and procedures in order to reduce civilian casualties even more. We are particularly saddened by the recent increase in deaths among women and children.

There is no military solution to this conflict. The Kabul process must be closely followed until transition to full Afghan leadership and responsibility is attained. The next few years offer a critical opportunity for donors to support Afghan priorities and commit to the principles on their effectiveness.

Other important steps to move the Kabul process forward include UNAMA's continued support for the promotion of coherent planning and delivery of aid,

based on the principle of Afghan ownership and leadership of aid coordination.

We believe that enhancing productivity in agriculture is of particular importance in helping to lay the foundation for both peace and development in Afghanistan. The creation of conditions for sustainable agriculture deserves full attention.

Brazil is committed to strengthening its contribution to the stability and social and economic development of Afghanistan. We will soon open an embassy in Kabul.

We have sent a mission to Afghanistan to identify areas for technical cooperation. In consultation with the Afghan Government, we have decided to develop a capacity-building project in the area of agro-ecological zoning for wheat and soybean crops, which we hope will help to advance sustainable agriculture in Afghanistan.

Here in the Security Council, and through an enhanced bilateral presence in Kabul, Brazil stands ready to work with the Afghan people and Government towards a brighter future. In response to the express wish of the Afghan Government and as requested by the Secretary-General, Brazil supports the extension of the mandate of UNAMA for a further 12 months.

Ms. Čolaković (Bosnia and Herzegovina): Allow me first to thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report (S/2011/120*) and its annex on the measurement of progress against the benchmarks established at the London and Kabul Conferences. We also wish to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Staffan de Mistura for his valuable briefing and Ambassador Tanin for his comments.

Bosnia and Herzegovina expresses its concern at the continued deterioration of the security situation in Afghanistan owing to the increase in military operations, the use of improvised explosive devices and suicide attacks. Regrettably, the rising human cost of the armed conflict in Afghanistan reached the number of 7,120 civilian casualties in 2010, which represents an increase of 19 per cent compared to 2009. Child casualties increased significantly in 2010, and the same trend continued in 2011 as children continued to be victims of the ongoing conflict. These vast human losses indicate that the solution to the conflict cannot be a military one and that, in order to prevent continued suffering and rising civilian casualties, a political solution to the conflict must be found. We are of the view that all parties must strengthen their efforts to protect civilians and ensure that their actions are in line with international legal norms.

In light of the recent developments in Afghanistan, it is encouraging to see that the Afghan National Assembly has been established and that the Upper House and Lower House have elected their Speakers. These positive political developments send an important signal, which is the first necessary step on the path towards national unity and the establishment of Afghan institutions that are capable of catering to the needs of the Afghan people.

In this context, we were pleased to learn that the reintegration and reconciliation process has maintained its positive momentum. We encourage the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) to continue to provide its good offices, to promote confidence-building measures to support the High Peace Council, to implement the Afghan Peace and Reintegration Programme, and to develop and implement the Afghan-led reconciliation process.

We believe that regional cooperation is of critical importance to Afghanistan's reconciliation process and future economic development. In that context, we commend the establishment of a joint peace committee by Pakistan and Afghanistan, and the increasing regional cooperation with Turkey, Turkmenistan, India and Iran in the areas of the economic development and trade, which may provide a basis for the sustainable improvement of the security and economic situations in Afghanistan.

With respect to the Kabul process and aid coherence, we take positive note of the progress of its implementation by the Government of Afghanistan and of the development of its 22 national priority programmes, in particular the public financial management programme, which is considered to be crucial to the implementation of all other programmes.

Furthermore, we welcome the initial achievements in the transfer of the security sector to Afghan authorities, which is one of the most important elements of the Kabul process. In addition, we commend UNAMA for its support to the Afghan Government on this critical objective, which includes a long-term partnership with the international community. We share the Secretary-General's view that sustainable long-term security in the country is to be achieved through

interdependence with economic development and good governance. We are looking forward to the announcement of the first round of transfers of districts and provinces to the Afghan authorities on 21 March.

With regard to the obstacles to the transition process, we hope that the problems caused by the flaws in the election process will be resolved in a transparent and constructive manner that will satisfy all parties and preserve political stability.

As for the impasse over the Kabul Bank, linked to the finalization of the agreement on a new International Monetary Fund country programme, we support a solution that will best reflect the interests of the Afghan people and economic development of their country.

Furthermore, we welcome the strengthening of the United Nations own coherence in supporting the Government-led aid coordination through the development of an integrated strategic framework in five priority areas: peace, reconciliation and reintegration; governance and the rule of law; human rights; sustainable livelihood; and maternal and newborn health.

Bosnia and Herzegovina particularly commends the United Nations contribution to the return of refugees in Afghanistan. The 5.5 million refugees who have returned to Afghanistan over the past nine years represent a very encouraging sign. Those who returned deserve to receive all the support they need, and we call on all international stakeholders in Afghanistan to continue contributing to the creation of conditions for the sustainable return of the remaining refugees and for the return to their places of origin of internally displaced persons, who number more than 360,000.

We are encouraged to hear that the number of victims of landmines was reduced in 2010, and we encourage the United Nations to continue its support to the Mine Action Coordination Centre of Afghanistan.

Finally, Bosnia and Herzegovina reiterates its support for the central role that the United Nations continues to play in promoting peace and stability in Afghanistan by leading the efforts of the international community and coordinating and monitoring efforts to implement the Kabul process through the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board.

We wish to thank the Secretary-General, his Special Representative for Afghanistan, and UNAMA and its staff for their important work in difficult circumstances. In conclusion, Bosnia and Herzegovina supports the renewal of the mandate of UNAMA for an additional 12 months.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of China.

I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General De Mistura for his briefing and Ambassador Tanin for his statement.

At present, peaceful reconstruction in Afghanistan is at a critical stage. China supports the Kabul process. Work in Afghanistan in the fields of political stability, security, development and the rule of law should go hand in hand so that Afghan ownership can be achieved at an early date.

China congratulates the country on the inauguration of the Lower House of the National Assembly. We support the efforts of the Afghan Government to enhance its capacity-building and to promote the Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Programme while implementing relevant Council resolutions.

China is very concerned over the recent and frequent occurrence of security incidents and the rising civilian casualties. The transfer of security responsibility to the Afghan Government should be preceded by ensuring the country's safety and stability. The international community should, on the basis of respect for Afghanistan's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, honour its commitments to Afghanistan and continue to provide it with assistance. China supports the central role of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) in coordinating the assistance of the international community in reconstructing Afghanistan and effectively achieving Afghan ownership. We endorse the extension of UNAMA's mandate for an additional 12 months. The Council should attach due importance to Afghanistan's request that it extend UNAMA's mandate.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the representative of Italy.

Mr. Ragaglini (Italy): Italy endorses the statement that will be made later by the representative

of the European Union. I should like to add a few remarks in my national capacity.

We appreciate the long-term commitment of the United Nations to work with the Government and the people of Afghanistan. We reiterate our full support for the work of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Staffan de Mistura. Italy will work closely with UNAMA to reinvigorate the delivery of basic services to civilians. We commend the Organization on enhancing the coherence of international efforts in Afghanistan.

In a few days, President Karzai will formally announce the beginning of the transition process — a process that Italy strongly supports — in accordance with the framework established at the Kabul Conference last summer and confirmed at the Lisbon NATO Summit in November 2010. We see transition not as an exit strategy but as a condition-based joint process aimed at achieving Afghan ownership in security, governance and development. It entails both long-term international civilian commitment to support Afghanistan beyond 2014 and a strong Afghan commitment to translate the Kabul commitments into concrete actions.

Italy is exerting its utmost efforts to ensure that transition will be irreversible, including increased security trainers to 700 units of the 4,200 troops on the ground; a civilian-oriented presence in Herat; new initiatives to support governance at local and central levels; a wide range of development cooperation programmes and support to develop the private sector. We have also joined in the European Union's comprehensive effort in priority sectors of Afghanistan.

One key to stabilization is an effective, accountable and transparent Afghan Government that delivers basic services to its people. The Kabul process — whereby the Government of Afghanistan is assisted by the international community and commits to undertake reforms, improve governance and the rule of law, promote social and economic development and strengthen Afghan security capacities — remains pivotal. Roughly 70 per cent of Italy's aid to Afghanistan is already aligned with the priorities indicated by the Afghan Government. While we commend the Government on the establishment of an Afghan-led monitoring system, we now expect that the obstacles that still impede the channelling of additional resources through the Afghan budget will be removed and that the management of public funds will be improved. Transparent allocation of international resources is vital to our continued cooperation.

Italy also expects the Afghan Government to make full use of the valuable assistance and expertise of UNAMA and to work with the newly elected Wolesi Jirga, all the relevant Afghan institutions and Afghan civil society on initiating long-term electoral reform.

Another key to stabilization is the inter-Afghan political process. We support the intertwined processes of reintegration and reconciliation. Yet, that endeavour will not bring about lasting peace unless it is based on national consensus and is conducted in a spirit of true openness to all sectors of Afghan society. The red lines agreed upon at the Kabul Conference must be respected. In other words, consideration has to be given to local traditions and sensibilities, as well as to the promotion of fundamental human rights. Italy commends the efforts of the High Peace Council to reach out to local authorities and representatives of ethnic minorities and civil society and encourages installation of the local bodies needed for reconciliation and reintegration.

That Afghan-led process requires the support of Afghanistan's regional partners. We therefore commend Afghanistan and Pakistan for deepening their strategic dialogue following the signing of the Afghanistan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement. But more can be done. Trade, water, energy, agriculture, capacity-building, vocational training, education, refugee return and reintegration and infrastructure are matters of common concern for Afghanistan and its neighbours. Joint actions on those issues will spur regional connectivity and help to address economic challenges and transnational threats.

Existing organizations and forums, in various forms, have a remarkable contribution to make to this process and deserve greater international support. We value the active role played by the Organization of the Islamic Conference and look forward to working with a growing number of Muslim countries to counter extremism and foster peace and reconciliation to the benefit of the Afghan people.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I now give the floor to the representative of Japan.

Mr. Nishida (Japan): At the outset, I wish to express my deep appreciation for the words of condolence and support expressed by the members of the Council for the people of my country, Japan, following the devastating earthquake and tsunami. The Japanese Government is making its utmost efforts to address the challenges we are now facing. Japan has overcome many challenges in the past. I am confident that we will once again do so this time.

I thank Special Representative de Mistura for his very comprehensive and informative briefing. At this juncture, I would also like to express my profound gratitude to all the men and women of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), who have demonstrated a deep commitment to this difficult mission. I also thank my dear friend Ambassador Tanin for his presence.

The reconstruction and development of Afghanistan is one of the most important issues facing the international community. While respecting Afghan ownership and in full cooperation with UNAMA, the international community must continue its support for the country of Afghanistan.

An important step for the Afghan Government took place when NATO allies and partners confirmed, at the NATO Summit in Lisbon last November, their commitment to create conditions to enable Afghan forces to take the lead for ensuring security in all provinces of the country by the end of 2014. The expected announcement of the first group of provinces for transition, on 21 March, will be an important step in this effort. These achievements signify the Afghan Government's determination to take full responsibility for its own development.

In that context, we welcome the tireless efforts made by the Afghan Government since the Kabul Conference. We expect further progress in improving security capacity and governance. Strengthening the capacity of Afghan security forces and promoting capacity-building of the central and local administrative institutions are indispensable. The international community, in support of the Afghan-owned process, must continue its engagement with the country in that regard. Japan has been providing, and is determined to continue, assistance for improving the quality of the Afghan National Police by funding police salaries and training of the police.

We welcomed the initiative taken by the Organization of the Islamic Conference to host the International Contact Group meeting in Jeddah. The Bonn Conference scheduled for December will be an important occasion to review progress and provide impetus for the efforts of Afghanistan and the international community in this undertaking.

Following the certification of the final results of the election of new members of the Lower House of Afghanistan, Japan welcomes the commencement of the new session and the election of the president of the Lower House. At the same time, we have to carefully follow the progress of the Special Court's activities. Japan fervently hopes that deliberations in the Lower House will proceed smoothly and that the remaining issues will be resolved as early as possible.

In order to ensure the sustainable development of Afghanistan, it is necessary to establish a system that enables the country to express its own will, built upon democratic processes. We hope that the Afghan Government will make its utmost effort for electoral reform, with the strong support of UNAMA and the international community, to achieve a free and transparent electoral system.

The Afghan-led political process, namely, involving reconciliation and reintegration, will be especially crucial in stabilizing Afghanistan this year. As the recent report of the Secretary-General (S/2011/120*) indicates, the transition process can be made sustainable only if it is accompanied by an inclusive political process. The inauguration of the High Peace Council and the creation of the Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Programme — together with the Peace and Reintegration Trust Fund — demonstrate the significant progress made by the Afghan Government.

Needless to say, this process must be led by the Afghan Government, with support from the international community, including my country, Japan. We provided funding for the Trust Fund in October and will play an active role in the conference on reintegration to be hosted by the Afghan Government this spring. We are ready to continue making our contribution in this area.

In order to consolidate the aforementioned gains and to improve the well-being of the Afghan people, keeping in mind a medium-to-long-term perspective beyond 2015, the international community must

respond to the country's development needs and promote the stabilization of livelihoods and the construction of basic economic infrastructure. Both the Afghan Government and the international community are required to make unremitting efforts towards this goal. Japan continues to provide assistance in human resource development and infrastructure, and for developing and rebuilding the agricultural sector and rural communities.

Having entered a new phase in the transition to Afghan responsibility, Afghanistan still faces various challenges. However, the country is steadily moving forward on the road towards development and reconstruction. Japan will continue to cooperate with the Afghan Government, UNAMA and other international partners to achieve real progress for the future of Afghanistan.

In conclusion, we would like to express our sincere appreciation for Special Representative De Mistura's dedication and reaffirm our commitment to supporting UNAMA's efforts.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I now give the floor to the representative of New Zealand.

Mr. McLay (New Zealand): When I last addressed the Council, I found myself expressing appreciation for the many statements of support that had been made in the aftermath of the then-recent Christchurch earthquake. I now find myself speaking immediately after the Permanent Representative of Japan. I would like to express New Zealand's support and sympathy for the dreadful situation that that country is facing. Japan gave unstintingly of its active help when we were in need, and we have been privileged to do likewise over the past six days.

The Secretary-General's latest report (S/2011/120*), Special Representative of the Secretary-General De Mistura's briefing and that of Ambassador Tanin provide evidence of many positive developments that have taken place in Afghanistan over the past three months — the progress of Afghan institutions towards taking lead responsibility for their country's security and the inauguration of Afghanistan's National Assembly being just two examples. But there have also been setbacks. Afghan civilians, for example, continue to suffer from the volatile security situation, and tensions remain between the executive, the legislature and the judiciary over the composition of Parliament.

New Zealand welcomes the understanding between the President and Parliament that allowed the successful inauguration of Afghanistan's National Assembly, which will, of course, play a critical role in Afghanistan's democratic governance. We encourage a spirit of cooperation between the institutions involved because that will validate the decision of millions of Afghans who defied threats and voted in September's elections. All of those are positive signs of a progressing democracy.

We look forward to the executive, the legislature and the judiciary carrying out their functions in accordance with the Constitution and overcoming their differences on the status of Parliament. While the representation issue must be addressed, it should be done in accordance with the Constitution, thus ensuring the confidence of the international community and, most importantly, of those who voted last year.

New Zealand strongly supports the transition process and welcomes the Afghan Government's commitment to assuming lead responsibility for all security by the end of 2014. We look forward to President Karzai's announcement of the first districts and provinces that will begin the process of transition to full Afghan authority.

In Bamyan province, where New Zealand leads the provincial reconstruction team, we have already begun the transition to Afghan leadership, and key milestones have been achieved. Along with our Afghan partners, we are focused on the need for local capacity-building and development assistance. New Zealand regards its provincial reconstruction teams as part and parcel of building the capability of the Afghan National Police and enabling development activity to take root and improve people's lives.

Although Bamyan province itself is relatively secure, New Zealand is still concerned over Afghanistan's overall security situation. For Afghan civilians, the Afghan security forces and international coalition forces, last year was the deadliest since the war began, reflecting the increase in suicide attacks and the use of improvised explosive devices by insurgents. That reinforces the need for the Afghan National Security Forces, partnering with the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), to quash insurgency and consolidate security. Combined with a push to increase Afghan civilian capacity, security gains will give space to and opportunity for a

political solution — an essential ingredient in ensuring a secure and prosperous Afghanistan.

That solution requires the further isolation of hardcore insurgency leaders, while those who renounce violence abandon alliances with Al-Qaida and embrace the Afghan Constitution are integrated into the mainstream. Increased pressure on those who disrupt the peace must be coupled with opportunity for insurgents who lay down their arms and help make that peace durable.

Progress towards such a solution is rightly being led by the Afghan Government, with the support of its neighbours and the international community. Accommodation will be required on all sides, but we strongly urge that it not be at the expense of hard-fought and hard-won rights and freedoms, especially those of women and minorities.

Along with Afghanistan, its neighbours and the international community, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) plays an important role in supporting a political solution, notably through the Salaam Support Group. As transition intensifies, UNAMA has an increasingly important role. We welcome its contribution to Afghan-led electoral reform, which will ensure that Afghanistan's elections are more cost-effective and sustainable. We emphasize the importance of those reforms to Afghanistan's overall democratic future.

It is also important, however, that UNAMA's mandate reflect the situation on the ground and the aspirations of the Afghan Government and the international community. We therefore welcome this Council's intention to review that mandate and believe that it should benefit from the outcomes of the second Bonn conference to be held in December. We look to the Council to give UNAMA the mandate it needs to support the Government during the critical period of transition between now and the end of 2014.

The next three years will be decisive in ensuring that the Afghan Government takes full responsibility for its country's security, so that, as ISAF troops are drawn down, the people of Afghanistan can assume full control of the destiny for which they have already sacrificed so much.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I now give the floor to the representative of Norway.

Ms. Smith (Norway): Let me first express our firm support for Special Representative De Mistura and commend him for his dedicated leadership in a time of transition to greater Afghan ownership.

Norway has a stake in the future of Afghanistan. We make a significant contribution of troops and we provide $150 million a year in development assistance. Our engagement is based on the principles of Afghan ownership and responsibility, as expressed in the joint Kabul Declaration last year.

In this respect, Norway supports a transition of security responsibilities to Afghan lead beginning this spring, provided that certain fundamental conditions are met. Yet only a political transition can bring long-term stability to Afghanistan. This, in turn, requires improved governance and substantial reforms in many areas. To implement a viable political reform agenda, the Afghan Government must continue to work closely with the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and the international community.

Future success is to a large extent dependent on developments at the provincial and district level, pending the implementation of the Afghan subnational governance policy. The continued presence of UNAMA offices is therefore a precondition for a successful and gradual political transition. Afghanistan needs a strong, well-functioning UNAMA just as much as UNAMA needs a reliable and responsible partner in the Afghan Government.

We strongly support Special Representative De Mistura's call for a surge for the protection of civilians, particularly as 2010 was the deadliest year for civilians since the fall of the Taliban regime in 2001. We expect all parties to fulfil their obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law.

Although the parliamentary election process was far from perfect, it is now important that the Parliament assume its functions and pursue the best interests of the Afghan people. The political crisis caused by the parliamentary elections once again showed the urgent need for electoral reform in Afghanistan. Norway will continue to support an Afghan-led electoral reform process that is sustainable and based on the joint commitment made at the Kabul Conference.

A structured political dialogue is vital in order to meet the challenges facing Afghanistan today. Norway

supports an Afghan-led peace process as part of a broader, viable and sustainable Afghan political settlement. The achievement of a peaceful and durable solution will require broad participation on the part of religious, ethnic and civil society groups from all over the country. The substantial participation of women is key to any durable peace process.

We note with concern the continued assaults on freedom of speech and the media, and we commend the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission for its resolute efforts to monitor, protect and promote respect for human rights in Afghanistan. Norway is pleased to note that human rights units have been established in the Afghan Ministry of Justice. This is an example of the Afghan Government's commitment to mainstreaming human rights in all national legislation.

Violence against women remains a major problem. Much has been achieved in terms of a strengthened legal framework for women's rights. However, there are still many obstacles to its implementation. A joint effort between Government authorities and civil society is likely to give the best and most sustainable results in terms of achieving long-term gender equality in Afghanistan.

UNAMA's mandate has to reflect today's political realities, including principles for a gradual and conditions-based transition. UNAMA must continue to assist the Afghan Government and the Afghan people in their continuous efforts to build a stable and peaceful Afghanistan. This requires a viable and credible Afghan leadership.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I give the floor to the representative of Turkey.

Mr. Apakan (Turkey): Let me begin by warmly greeting Ambassador Tanin and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Staffan de Mistura.

I would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2011/120*) and the Special Representative for his insightful briefing. We remain strongly supportive and appreciative of the efforts of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) under the effective leadership of the Special Representative.

At the last Council meeting on Afghanistan, I said that 2010 had been an important year and a milestone for Afghanistan. Today, I would like to add that 2011 will be crucial. According to the decisions taken at the London and Kabul Conferences and at the NATO Lisbon summit, this is the year that Afghanistan and its international partners will move steadily forward towards a transition to Afghan ownership and responsibility. We are encouraged by the steps taken so far and look forward to the official announcement by President Karzai next week of the launch of the first tranche of the transition to Afghan-led security, which is to be finalized in 2014.

While we are optimistic, we are also realistic with respect to the fact that, given the challenges facing us, the transition is not going to be an easy process. We appreciate the results already achieved by the Afghan authorities in the implementation of the Kabul process and urge them to push forward to bring about more tangible outcomes. A great deal remains to be done. However, we are confident of success as long as Afghanistan and its international partners are committed to working together. We will ensure that this gradual and conditions-based process is irreversible by exerting concerted and sustained efforts in conformity with the priorities and requirements of the Afghan Government. I must also once again emphasize that the transition does not mean an end to the international community's commitments in Afghanistan. It has been made clear that transition is not an exit and that the international community will continue to be engaged in Afghanistan beyond 2014.

This is also evidenced by the readiness and dedication of the United Nations to assist Afghan authorities and to support the Kabul process through a constructive, comprehensive, transparent, practically focused and complementary partnership. We are confident that the United Nations and its Mission in Afghanistan, under the leadership of Special Representative of the Secretary-General Staffan de Mistura, are capable of playing the critical role expected of them if provided with the necessary tools. We therefore endorse a strong mandate for UNAMA that is in accordance with the principles of Afghan leadership and ownership.

While we work towards a sustained and credible transfer of responsibility in the areas of security, governance and development, the ultimate goal of lasting peace, prosperity and stability in Afghanistan will be achieved only by parallel efforts in the political process. We are pleased to see a consensus on the fact

that military means alone will not guarantee a sustainable resolution of the conflict. It will certainly take time and dedicated effort, but 2011 will be crucial also in making credible progress towards reintegration and a political reconciliation which embraces all segments of society. This process should be Afghan-led, and we are pleased to see that Afghan authorities are indeed taking the lead. In that respect, we are supportive of the efforts of the High Peace Council and of the steps taken to implement the Afghan Peace and Reintegration Programme. We also encourage Afghanistan's regional and international partners to continue to provide the necessary support to those efforts as requested by Afghanistan.

While the transition to Afghan ownership and responsibility is progressing with the support of the international community, Turkey has been taking steps to ensure that its contributions to this effort continue in an effective manner. In this vein, we have been concentrating our efforts mainly on two levels. At the national level, we will intensify our ongoing efforts towards the development, reconstruction, capacity-building, education and training of the Afghan national police and army in line with the needs and requirements of the Afghan Government.

At the regional level, proceeding from the belief that the resolution of many of the challenges Afghanistan faces requires, first and foremost, the constructive support of its neighbours and regional partners, we will strive to continue our work towards regional cooperation, confidence- building and development. The year 2010 has been a busy and constructive one in setting down the fundamentals of a common vision for this purpose. It is our firm intention to take the regional dimension forward by holding another regional conference in Turkey in the fall. We will be consulting with Afghanistan and the regional countries in the process of preparing for that conference, which be will aimed at furthering the existing regional vision as based on the principles set out in the Statement adopted at the "Heart of Asia" conference. At the same time, we are convinced of the need to bridge the efforts made at the regional and international levels. Towards that end, we will continue to have intensive consultations with all relevant actors, making use of all available opportunities, in various formats.

In conclusion, let me emphasize that Turkey's commitment to Afghanistan is long-term and will continue as long as required by the Afghans.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I now give the floor to the representative of Canada.

Mr. McNee (Canada): The Council meets today to discuss the situation in Afghanistan and the role of the international community in helping it to become more stable and secure. Strong leadership by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) is crucial in this regard. Canada salutes the continuing, committed and very effective leadership of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Staffan de Mistura. We thank him for his very good briefing today, and we note with appreciation the report of the Secretary-General (S/2011/120*) and his recommendations for the Mission for the coming year.

In its deliberations, the Council should continue to ensure that the renewed mandate reflects the evolving situation in Afghanistan. The international community's efforts over the next years should focus on the process towards greater Afghan leadership in order to ensure that Afghanistan has the best chance for success and that the progress that has been achieved in development, governance and security will be consolidated.

Over the past year, the Afghan Government has demonstrated leadership in coordinating the international community around a focused series of national priority programmes that prioritize the development objectives outlined in the Afghan National Development Strategy. While they began with a great deal of promise, we are concerned by recent developments that threaten the progress of these programmes. Critical to this is finding a satisfactory way of implementing the President's decree on private security companies and resolving critical issues at Kabul Bank. UNAMA should be at the forefront of these discussions and continue to fulfil its critical role in coordinating donors and ensuring that the international community is responding adequately to Afghanistan's needs. Canada remains committed to working with international partners and the Government of Afghanistan in supporting the Kabul process and realizing the objectives of these programmes.

The transition of security responsibility to Afghan authorities by 2014 is a goal shared by Afghanistan and

the international community. The increasing capabilities of Afghan institutions, notably the Afghan National Security Forces, will allow the process of transition to begin in the coming months. At the same time, it will be important to build up the civilian governance institutions that will need to oversee the Afghan National Security Forces.

As others have noted today, the security situation remains a serious concern. The most recent UNAMA report highlights the growing human cost of the conflict in Afghanistan. Every step possible must be taken to avoid civilian casualties due to International Security Assistance Force operations. But it is very important to stress that over three-quarters of all civilian casualties last year were caused by insurgents. Canada strongly condemns continuing attacks on civilians and humanitarian personnel and calls for respect for key principles to allow the full, safe and unhindered access of humanitarian actors to people in need.

Reconciliation between the Government of Afghanistan and the Taliban is critical to our efforts in bringing the conflict in Afghanistan to a successful conclusion. This reconciliation process should be Afghan-led, but the international community should support a process that respects "red lines" requiring the insurgents to renounce violence, recognize and respect the Constitution of Afghanistan, and sever ties with Al-Qaida and other terrorist organizations. Within the international community, support from Afghanistan's neighbours, in particular Pakistan, will be critical.

This is the first open debate on Afghanistan since the tenth anniversary of the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security. Progress has been made, but the continued efforts of the Afghan Government, civil society, the United Nations and the international community as a whole are required to prevent backsliding and to secure a brighter, more stable future for the women of Afghanistan. In 2010, we welcomed the commitment by the Government at the Kabul Conference to identifying and prioritizing benchmarks for the National Action Plan for the Women of Afghanistan, as well as its commitment to developing a strategy to implement the law on the elimination of violence against women. Canada does remain concerned, though, about the potential implications for women's rights in the original draft regulation on women's shelters. We urge the Government of Afghanistan to ensure that the regulation respects its national and international human rights obligations to women and girls.

(*spoke in French*)

Afghanistan's relationship with its neighbours is also central to its development. The States of the region are the most affected by the situation in Afghanistan and play a primary role in helping it to become more stable and secure. It is important that these States play a positive role, allowing Afghanistan to develop its own institutions and structures free from outside influences. Additionally, we note with appreciation the positive dialogue that has been taken up by regional organizations and individual countries, and encourage Afghanistan and its neighbours to ensure that it continues. By maintaining such links, Afghanistan can continue to foster greater understanding with its neighbours and develop the links crucial to its long-term prosperity and security.

We note that the 2010 parliamentary elections were not held under ideal circumstances and were marred by many irregularities. However, the Government of Afghanistan and UNAMA are in a unique position to work together in order to distil the lessons learned from this event and to further strengthen Afghanistan's electoral institutions. Afghanistan's democratic process has three key components: ensuring the sustainability of electoral reforms, strengthening democratic institutions and allowing Afghans to be heard.

UNAMA's mandate will come to an end later this month, and the Security Council will deliberate and decide on the best way forward for the Mission. In so doing, it will take into account the clear progress achieved within the country and the many challenges that remain.

In conclusion, Canada will remain a devoted partner of the Afghan Government in order to ensure that Afghanistan becomes a country where all its citizens can live in freedom and security.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I now give the floor to the representative of Pakistan.

Mr. Haroon (Pakistan): Before I proceed, the recent events in Japan must find a place in my speech. We not only commiserate with the people of that noble country, but recognize their great contributions to the

United Nations. We would like to express solidarity with them at this stage.

I would also like to recognize the briefing by Special Representative of the Secretary-General Staffan de Mistura. We greatly value the work of the United Nations in all areas of the world, and specifically Afghanistan.

The problem we seem to face here on a fairly regular basis, without denigrating the great work being done by this Council or its members - all honourable members, who I find are absolutely on the dot – is that, nevertheless, very often, sitting here, we somehow, without quite realizing it, start reinventing the wheel. I am not terribly sure that this is something that is necessarily beneficial. When we start reinventing the wheel, I believe that we should recognize the fact that we have a diplomat who implements the work of the Council and the Secretary-General.

However, at the same time, it must be realized that with a State that is as old as, if not beyond the age of, known history, there is a certain requirement for it to fulfil its sovereignty. The fact that it has survived so long and that it wants to have some say in its destiny creates some distance between what is happening here and what is felt necessary and beneficial there. That, my friends, creates some sort of a divide of which, unfortunately, we are not aware when we sit here and talk about such issues, inasmuch as we have the noblest intentions, beliefs, concepts, paradigms and ideology.

However, that country has its own beliefs and traditions, which may indeed have led to war, not so much of its own doing, but through the expansion of empires. It is like the continental plates under the oceans that, as they rub against each other and want to move from one point to another, create an earthquake, a tsunami. That country has been caught is such a tsunami, such an earthquake. It is not of its doing, or that it wants that. I think that we also have to respect that. If we really wish to have a comprehensive and cohesive policy, we must understand the requirements of both sides, some of which may at times seem at cross purposes with the very noble design of the Council.

The Secretary-General's quarterly reports are an important yardstick. Regarding some aspects of the latest report (S/2011/120), I think that the personnel enhancement of the Afghan National Army and it reaching the targeted figure by 2012 are issues that most people readily support. I think that the question of governance and institution-building is a very important aspect, but I believe that we must recognize that there will often be changes in the noble designs suggested in the very Council itself.

It is a great pleasure to note that the Afghan National Development Strategy is supported by both sides in most areas. That is an important aspect because aid must be disbursed with the cohesion, connivance and interest of the national Government. As raised in the report, Afghan ownership is important for all these points to succeed. That is only possible when there is such cohesion.

The report documents the challenges ahead for the international community in Afghanistan. It envisages the transfer of full responsibilities to Afghan institutions, specifically through the Kabul process, and the aspect of commitment to economic development, good governance and a comprehensive vision of security. I feel that that might occasionally be at odds with what is being advocated here.

While security has an important contribution to make, we must realize that the challenges are myriad and very extensive. I feel that incidents that have taken place within Afghanistan are reprehensible and that we should understand what is happening from the Afghan perspective and point of view.

We have no hesitation in extending the fullest security and intelligence cooperation to Afghanistan, including through the Tripartite Commission, which includes the United States and the International Security Assistance Force. The number of our military and paramilitary personnel deployed along the border is more than all international troops present in the whole of Afghanistan. Our efforts and financial costs should not be downplayed or denigrated. Pakistan's commitment to peace in the region is unwavering. We do not want Afghanistan to remain a theatre of proxy wars.

We must understand that there is a specific area from west of the Indus roughly to the Oxus, even beyond in places, that the British accepted as part of their imperial design and commitment. Today, that is where the theatre of war is most evident.

The London and Kabul processes emphasize the Afghan Reintegration Programme, which needs

international support for the Government's efforts. We support an Afghan-led inclusive reconciliation process. The visit of Burhanuddin Rabbani, Chair of the High Peace Council, to my country in January and the International Contact Group meeting in Jeddah were landmark events. We are supportive of such engagements, including the High Peace Council's interaction with the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference.

Pakistan wants durable peace in Afghanistan. I would take this opportunity to highlight that the safe return of over 1.5 million registered Afghan refugees, the smooth implementation of the Afghanistan-Pakistan Transit and Trade Agreement and the completion of transregional economic projects are conceivable only in a secure and stable Afghanistan.

The quest for peace and stability in Afghanistan dovetails with a long-term Pakistan-Afghanistan cooperative partnership. Despite our own woes, we are continuing our assistance, the largest that we have in any country.

I will conclude by reiterating our support for the objectives and efforts of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan. I hope that the draft resolution to extend its mandate for another 12 months will be adopted by consensus and implemented with the complete support of the international community, to the satisfaction of Afghanistan.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Khazaee (Islamic Republic of Iran): Like my dear colleague, the Ambassador of Pakistan, I will try to be brief.

Allow me to start by expressing our gratitude to the Secretary-General and his Special Representative, our good and dear friend Mr. de Mistura, head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, for their efforts and dedication to strengthening peace and stability in Afghanistan. We attach great importance to the role of the United Nations in coordinating international efforts in Afghanistan, and extend our full support for the Mission's success.

Very briefly, I would like to touch upon a few points regarding the prevailing situation in Afghanistan.

First, the announcement of the drawdown of United States military forces this year is a welcome step, but this withdrawal should not be compensated for by the establishment of permanent military bases in Afghanistan. Obviously, the presence of foreign military forces, in whatever form and under whatever justification, would not help to ensure peace and stability in Afghanistan; rather, it would provide enough excuse for the extremist groups to prolong and continue the armed conflict.

Secondly, we are very concerned about the increase in the loss of lives and injuries inflicted upon Afghan civilians. We are also worried about more displacements of people. Putting the lives of innocent people at the mercy of drone attacks must be halted. There is no justification for putting the lives of innocent civilians at risk in the name of countering terrorism.

Thirdly, we welcome the initiative of the Government of Afghanistan in setting up the High Peace Council. Mr. Rabani, the head of the Council, paid a visit to Iran and we expressed our readiness to host one of the meetings of the Council in Iran, with the participation of Afghan political groups and factions. We hope that the High Peace Council will expand its discussions on the reconciliation and reintegration efforts within Afghanistan and with the countries in the region.

Fourthly, in the area of regional cooperation, the neighbouring countries of Afghanistan share critical interests in Afghanistan's security and long-term stability and play a role in promoting Afghanistan's socio-economic development. Obviously, a stable and flourishing Afghanistan would be the ideal situation for its neighbours and the wider region. The continuing engagement between Afghanistan and its neighbours and regional partners in the areas of trade and economic and infrastructure development must be supported.

Fifthly, the narcotic drugs problem is still one of the most serious challenges that Afghanistan and the transit countries are facing. We should all take seriously the warning issued in January by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime that rising opium prices may encourage farmers to plant more opium poppies. The traffic in narcotics has also served as a breeding ground for terrorists, extremists and illegal groups attempting to destabilize the Afghan

Government. We call again on those who bear the responsibility for combating narcotic drugs on behalf of the international community to take more concrete steps to curb this threat as soon as possible.

Sixthly, we have continued our dialogue with the Afghan authorities on bilateral cooperation, particularly in relation to increasing cooperation on security matters, counter-narcotics efforts, illegal immigrants, migrant workers and the completion of development projects, including road and railway building. A number of agreements were reached at last week's visit by Iran's Minister of the Interior to Afghanistan, and we look forward to more agreements at the bilateral and trilateral summits of the Presidents of Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan, and the trilateral meeting with Tajikistan during next week's visit to Iran for the celebration of Nowruz.

We are confident that the people and Government of Afghanistan, who have undergone so many hardships and much suffering in past decades, will soon surmount the challenges and difficulties and move ahead towards a prosperous, peaceful and stable Afghanistan. We wish them the best, especially at the beginning of Nowruz, the historical New Year celebration, in the coming days.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I now give the floor to the representative of Australia.

Mr. Goledzinowski (Australia): I thank you, Sir, for the opportunity to address the Council today. Given the hour, I will somewhat reduce the length of my printed statement.

However, I would like to begin, as other have done, by extending the condolences of my delegation to the delegation, Government and people of Japan. They are going through a very difficult time, but we know that they will recover from this period because that is who they are.

I would also like to thank Ambassador Tanin for his presentation, and to commend the Special Representative and head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), Mr. Staffan de Mistura, for the important work he is doing in partnership with the Government of Afghanistan. Australia welcomes the opportunity to reaffirm our commitment to international efforts in Afghanistan and supports the renewed UNAMA mandate for a further 12 months.

This discussion takes place at an important time for the partnership between the international community and the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. Next week, the President of Afghanistan, Hamid Karzai, we understand is due to announce the first provinces to begin the transition of responsibility for security to Afghan leadership. This announcement will mark the beginning of a process to fulfil President Karzai's goal for the Afghan National Security Forces to take the lead in conducting security operations across Afghanistan by the end of 2014. This is a goal which the international community fully supports, and 2011 is the lynch pin of that goal.

At the December debate on Afghanistan (see S/PV.6464), we welcomed the release of the final results of the Wolesi Jirga elections. The National Assembly performs a vital role within Afghanistan's system of governance. Since that time, we have been pleased to see the election of a Speaker to the Wolesi Jirga, who we understand has made an excellent start in his work. We note that further investigations into the September 2010 parliamentary elections have been referred to a special tribunal. It is vital that, if any further investigations are pursued, they be in full accordance with the Afghan Constitution and other relevant Afghan laws.

The continued development of democratic institutions based on the rule of law and the separation of powers is crucial to a stable Afghanistan. We encourage President Karzai and all who serve in the Afghan Government as they work to continue to rebuild their country and to strengthen the foundations of sustainable peace and constitutional democracy.

Strengthening Afghan governance and development will be critical to sustainable, irreversible transition. The United Nations has a key role in the international civilian effort to enable greater Afghan capacity and leadership in support of transition, including in responding to requests by the Afghan authorities for support to the electoral process.

We have come a long way down that path, but there is still a long way to go. Reconciliation and reintegration are a part of Afghanistan's future, and these processes must be Afghan-owned and led. UNAMA is providing essential support to the Afghan Government's efforts. For example, UNAMA's logistical support, via the Salaam Support Group, has enabled the High Peace Council to undertake an active

programme of regional and provincial visits. These visits are improving local and regional support for reconciliation and reintegration processes.

Afghanistan's neighbours and regional partners, from whom we have just heard, play an important role in supporting the reconciliation process. Australia commends the efforts of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to promote regional engagement in accordance with UNAMA's mandate.

I would like to briefly draw on Australia's engagement in Afghanistan in the period since we last addressed the Council on this issue.

As the Council knows, Australia is the tenth-largest contributor of troops to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and the largest non-NATO troop contributor overall. Two weeks ago, my Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Kevin Rudd, visited Afghanistan. His trip was focused on Kabul and on Uruzgan province, where Australia is engaged as part of the ISAF-flagged Combined Team-Uruzgan. Mr. Rudd visited Australian soldiers and civilians working in Tarin Kowt, in Uruzgan province, and saw first-hand the positive effects of the international community's efforts. To quote the Minister, there is "clear evidence of progress being made in our mission". That is what we believe.

We are also seeing progress in our development and governance efforts. Australia will deliver $123.1 million in development assistance to Afghanistan this fiscal year, with the Australian Agency for International Development's country programme growing by 50 per cent, to $106 million. During 2010, Australia tripled its civilian capacity in Afghanistan to some 50 people. An Australian civilian leads the provincial reconstruction team in Uruzgan, where we are seeing slow but steady progress in improving standards of governance and development.

It is heartening to see discussion of Afghanistan's prospects for increased trade and investment. I refer in this instance in particular to the Afghanistan International Investment Conference, hosted by the United Arab Emirates late in 2010, which was attended by my Minister for Foreign Affairs. Improving the economic well-being of Afghanistan is key to improving the livelihoods of Afghans and, in turn, their prospects for a safe and stable society.

Australia's engagement is but one example of the international community's long-term commitment to Afghanistan.

I would like to take a moment to remember those civilians who have been killed or wounded in Afghanistan since 2001. I refer to the recent report by UNAMA and the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, which urges all parties involved in the armed conflict in Afghanistan to strengthen their efforts to protect Afghan civilians.

Finally, I also take this moment to acknowledge the dedication and sacrifice of UNAMA personnel working in Afghanistan. Australia supports all efforts to ensure that those who work in support of Afghanistan's future are able to do so with the security necessary to complete their challenging tasks.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I now give the floor to the representative of the European Union.

Mr. Serrano (European Union): The candidate countries Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Montenegro; the countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia; as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia, align themselves with this declaration.

Like others, I would like to greet Special Representative of the Secretary-General Staffan de Mistura and his team and thank them for their excellent work and for the good cooperation with the European Union. I also thank Ambassador Tanin for his presentation.

The Secretary-General's report on the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) (S/2011/120*) before the Council today devotes a good deal of attention to the transition to full Afghan leadership regarding security and to the broader Kabul process, which has gained some momentum in recent months.

The European Union welcomes the wish of the Afghan Government to take the lead in the transition process and the overall development of Afghanistan, as recently expressed in the letter of the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Rassoul, to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon (S/2011/118, annex). We appreciate the fact that the transition will soon be officially launched by President Karzai on the occasion of the Afghan New Year, on 21 March.

At the same time, we fully endorse that — as the Secretary-General underlines — the exercise of sovereignty also implies responsibility, first and foremost towards the Afghan people. In the face of significant security incidents, many of which affect or target an alarming number of civilians, we remain committed to calling for and assisting in a sustainable transition process. While we are pleased with the continuing build-up of Afghan security institutions, we still need to see them develop a stronger capability to protect the population against violence and hence support training efforts to that end.

Together, we all subscribed to a comprehensive vision of security for Afghanistan that encompasses good governance, human rights and development. We did so because it is our common understanding that a successful and sustainable transition is also predicated on an inclusive political process and on tangible, country-wide improvements for the Afghan people. In view of that, we hope that the political institutions can soon focus on the actual challenges at hand and thereby gain further legitimacy in the eyes of the population. We believe that it is time to resolve the current disagreements over the composition of the Parliament while respecting the mandate of the electoral institutions and the separation of powers.

On a more general note, building strong and credible institutions capable of delivering justice and other services to the people is a key priority. Also, we cannot stress enough the importance of improving the capability to ensure the human rights of all Afghans, including women, children and persons belonging to religious or ethnic minorities, and to protect them from violence and abuse. Moreover, the European Union firmly believes that all countries stand to gain from the greater involvement of women as important actors in post-conflict development- as stated in resolution 1325 (2000) - and in public life in general.

The Kabul process has made some headway since the Kabul Conference in July last year, but more remains to be done to respond to the basic needs of the Afghan people. For its part, not only has the European Union further increased its assistance package, but it is also on track regarding the alignment of its programmes with Government priorities and the channelling of assistance through Afghan Government structures and multi-donor trust funds.

Afghan ownership and leadership is indeed essential for a sustainable transition and needs to be matched with accountability, strengthened financial management and effective institutions. That is also indispensable for the success of the national priority programmes and for continued international assistance in times of greater scrutiny by the domestic constituencies of Afghanistan's partners. Moreover, it has become apparent that economic governance requires particular attention, including improving oversight of the financial sector, with the assistance of international financial institutions where necessary.

As the transition gradually proceeds, UNAMA continues to play a critical role in the coordination and management of international assistance, as well as in support of the Afghan-led peace and reconciliation process, which must respect human rights and transitional justice. A balanced UNAMA presence throughout the country, including through United Nations funds and programmes, is needed for that purpose, all the more so because we believe that United Nations field offices carry out essential tasks.

We also endorse a continued United Nations role in long-term electoral reforms, the importance of which was underlined in the Kabul communiqué, in particular as regards the sustainability of the electoral process. Efforts in that field should build on the lessons drawn from the 2009 and 2010 electoral cycles.

In conclusion, we support the proposed extension of a strong UNAMA mandate so that the Mission can continue to contribute to and steer the creation of an enabling environment for successful transition and transformation in Afghanistan. For its part, the European Union recently reaffirmed its strong support for transition and the importance of long-term cooperation with Afghanistan, also beyond 2014, in a meeting with President Karzai.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I now give the floor to Mr. De Mistura to respond to comments.

Mr. De Mistura: I will keep my remarks extremely brief in view of the time and the fact that we are very satisfied with what we have heard today.

I would like to make two points. First, we will do our best to implement the common understanding that we perceive as becoming apparent in the Security Council regarding the review and the future mandate and activities of the United Nations Assistance Mission

in Afghanistan (UNAMA). Of course, that will be based on the work done in the context of the review process and on the realities on the ground, so that the Council, which will make the mandate adjustments, will be able to consider the results of the review. We will do our best to do that together.

Secondly, I would like to say a few words about an issue that we have not flagged enough here today. I was planning to do so myself at a certain point. The issue pertains to 51 per cent of the Afghan population: the women of Afghanistan. We will continue to consider it part of our duties to help the Afghan authorities ensure that Afghan women will continue to have a better future. A total of 69 women are members of Parliament. Recently, we have been very concerned about a number of issues related to women's shelters. I will insist on that point because it is part of the human rights mandate of UNAMA to do everything we can to assist this large, important part of the Afghan population.

A female Afghan Member of Parliament reminded me that one of the most important areas is education. If you teach and educate a man, you educate a man; if you educate a woman, you educate a family. She reminded me of that just before I came here, so I take this opportunity to recall it here today.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*). There are no further speakers inscribed on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 1.30 p.m.